

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL
MARCH 15, 2017
2:00 P.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairman/Chief of Staff
DR. MARK GOTCHER	Acting Chair (for first hour) Vice Chairman/Deputy Commissioner
DR. IVY PFEFFER	Asst. Commissioner - HR/Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. ERIC SAUNDERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
MR. GREG ROGERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
MS. STACY SMITH	Asst. Commissioner - Learning Services
MR. BOBBY LESTER	Director of Federal Programs
MS. LISA HALEY	Special Education Division Manager

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.
MS. MARY PERRY	ADE Assistant to Director

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Staff Attorney
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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Good afternoon, Ladies and
3 Gentlemen. The March 15, 2017 meeting of the Charter
4 Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to
5 welcome everyone to the Department of Education
6 auditorium. Please silence all electronic devices at
7 this time.

8 The Charter Authorizing Panel oversees the
9 authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of
10 charters. The Arkansas Quality Charter Schools Act
11 of 2013 requires the Commissioner to appoint the
12 Department of Education staff to the Panel. On July
13 1, 2015, Commissioner Key named nine members to the
14 Charter Authorizing Panel. He recently filled one
15 vacant position and that is with Ms. Lisa Haley, our
16 Director of Special Ed. Also on the Panel: Mr. Bobby
17 Lester, Coordinator of Federal Programs; Mr. Greg
18 Rogers, Assistant Commissioner of Fiscal
19 Administration; Dr. Eric Saunders, Assistant
20 Commissioner of Research and Technology; Ms. Annette
21 Barnes, who is absent today; Dr. Ivy Pfeffer,
22 Assistant Commissioner for Educator Effectiveness and
23 Licensure; Ms. Stacy Smith, Assistant Commissioner of
24 Learning Services. Ms. Debbie Coffman, our Chief of
25 Staff and Chair, is en route; she will be here

1 shortly. So for the moment you have me, Dr. Mark
2 Gotcher, as your Vice Chair serving as Chair for the
3 moment.

4 As Chair, the goal is to facilitate a fair and
5 responsible hearing. I'll request that each person
6 speaking please state your name and title for the
7 record. I'll ask that you continue to speak clearly
8 into the microphone -- and just a note, you need to
9 be just within a few inches of that microphone in
10 order to be heard -- and you're welcome to take it
11 from its stand if you need to -- for the benefit of
12 the Panel, the audience, and of course the viewing
13 audience. The entire meeting is being live-streamed
14 and recorded. Ms. Sharon Hill, our court reporter,
15 will be providing a transcript of the meeting and it
16 will be posted on our website.

17 Staff attorneys are Ms. Jennifer Davis and
18 General Counsel Ms. Lori Freno. At this time please
19 explain the hearing process and the process of how
20 the Charter Authorizing Panel will report to the
21 State Board for consideration of review or not review
22 of the Panel's decision. Ms. Davis, good afternoon.

23 MS. DAVIS: Hi, good afternoon. Jennifer Davis,
24 staff attorney for the Department. The first two
25 action items today will have the same procedures, so

1 I'll go ahead and go over both of those now, and then
2 when we get to the third item we'll deal with
3 different procedures. And the procedures for both of
4 these amendments will be that the applicant will have
5 20 minutes to make its argument to you for its
6 amendment. There will be 20 minutes collectively for
7 opposition. After that, there will be 5 minutes
8 rebuttal time. You can ask any questions that you
9 need to of any Department staff or the applicant
10 before you make your decision. And additionally,
11 since we do have a lot of people, just a reminder
12 that all persons, with the exception of attorneys,
13 will need to be sworn in that do provide any
14 testimony to you today.

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Very well. Thank you, Ms.
16 Davis.

17 CONSENT AGENDA

18 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Panel, at this time there
19 is no Chair's report, so we'll move into Item 2, the
20 Consent Agenda. And does anyone have any questions
21 regarding the February 15th minutes of the Charter
22 Authorizing Panel?

23 If not, I'll have a motion to accept the
24 minutes.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: I make a motion to accept.

1 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Motion to accept by Dr.
2 Saunders.

3 MR. LESTER: Second.

4 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Second by Mr. Bobby
5 Lester.

6 All in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All opposed same sign?
9 All right. Consent Agenda motion is passed.

10 A-1: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENTS:
11 ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (ARCA)

12 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Per the instructions of
13 Ms. Davis, we'll move into our action item, Action
14 Item Number 1, Request for Open-Enrollment Charter
15 School, Arkansas Connections Academy. Ms. Perry,
16 good afternoon.

17 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Good afternoon. Virginia
18 Perry, Program Advisor for the Charter Unit.

19 Action Item 1 is Arkansas Connections Academy
20 amendment request and on the phone we have Ms. Darla
21 Gardner.

22 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Ms. Darla Gardner, can you
23 hear us at this time?

24 MS. GARDNER: Yes, I can.

25 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Welcome to the

1 telephone.

2 MS. GARDNER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: You're welcome. All
4 right.

5 MS. GARDNER: How are you?

6 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: I'm doing well. We'll
7 give the floor to you at this time and per the
8 instructions you have 20 minutes. But before we do
9 so -- forgive me, thank you, Mr. Bradberry -- will
10 all the representatives from the Charter, anyone
11 speaking in opposition please stand to receive the
12 oath -- and, Ms. Gardner, I'll assume that you're
13 doing that on your end. And now, do you swear or
14 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
15 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
16 truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 MS. GARDNER: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Gardner.
20 All right. You may begin.

21 MS. GARDNER: Thank you. I'm Darla Gardner, the
22 School Leader at Arkansas Connections Academy, and
23 I'm here today to request a rescission of two
24 waivers. These waivers can be found in the charter
25 amendment request form that was submitted to the

1 Board. We worked with the ADE and we did determine
2 that the waivers are no longer needed by Arkansas
3 Connections Academy and we just would like to rescind
4 those. And thank you for your consideration.

5 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you, Ms.
6 Gardner.

7 Anyone in opposition?

8 All right. If none, Ms. Gardner you have 5
9 additional minutes should you need them.

10 MS. GARDNER: I don't need them at this time.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you, Ms.
13 Gardner.

14 Panel, it's up to you for questions at this
15 time. Does anyone have any questions regarding this
16 action item?

17 Seeing no questions, I'll accept a motion to
18 approve the amendment.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: I'll make a motion to approve the
20 amendment.

21 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Motion by Dr. Saunders.

22 MR. ROGERS: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Second by Mr. Rogers.

24 Any discussion?

25 All in favor?

1 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All opposed?

3 All right. Motion passes.

4 Thank you, Ms. Gardner.

5 MS. GARDNER: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: We appreciate your time
7 and thank you for making this a quick agenda item; we
8 appreciate that.

9 MS. GARDNER: Thank you. Have a good afternoon.

10 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: You, as well. Thank you.

11 All right. Ms. Perry, I believe we have Action
12 Item Number 2.

13 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Yes, sir. Action Agenda
14 Item Number 2 --

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: I'm sorry?

16 MS. PFEFFER: Do our findings sheet?

17 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Oh, that's right. Sitting
18 in this chair I don't have to do the voting sheets.
19 So why don't we do the voting sheets at this time.
20 Thank you, Ms. Perry. Sorry about that, Panel; small
21 technicality.

22 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

23 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: We'll begin with Ms.
24 Haley.

25 MS. HALEY: I voted to approve the request and

1 have no concerns.

2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Mr. Lester.

3 MR. LESTER: I voted to approve. I have no
4 concerns with the amendments.

5 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Dr. Pfeiffer.

6 DR. PFEFFER: I voted to approve the amendment.

7 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Mr. Rogers.

8 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. I don't have any
9 concerns with the amendment.

10 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Dr. Saunders.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Voted for it. I have no
12 concerns.

13 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: And, finally, Ms. Smith.

14 MS. SMITH: I voted for. No concerns.

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you,
16 Panel Members.

17 A-2: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENTS:
18 SCHOOL FOR INTEGRATED ACADEMICS AND TECHNOLOGIES (SIATech)

19 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Ms. Perry, is it a good
20 time to move to Action Item 2?

21 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Yes, sir.

22 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you.

23 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Action Agenda Item Number 2
24 is an amendment request from the School for
25 Integrated Academics and Technologies, or SIATech.

1 And the chief presenter for this amendment request is
2 Superintendent Katie Tatum.

3 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Ms. Tatum, good afternoon.

4 SUPT. TATUM: Good afternoon, Dr. Gotcher and
5 Panel Members.

6 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Excuse me just a moment.
7 We need to go ahead and -- before we do that, Ms.
8 Tatum, would all representatives from the Charter,
9 anyone speaking in opposition please stand to receive
10 the oath?

11 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
12 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth and
13 nothing but the truth?

14 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you.
16 You may be seated.

17 Thank you, Ms. Tatum. Your 20 minutes has
18 begun.

19 SUPT. TATUM: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Gotcher.
20 I'm coming before the Panel today because we would
21 like to implement waiver 6-16-102 that we already
22 have for school day hours.

23 MS. DAVIS: I'm sorry; did you do the oath as
24 well?

25 SUPT. TATUM: Did I need to raise my hand?

1 MS. DAVIS: Well, I mean, we didn't hear you.
2 That's why I was just making sure.

3 SUPT. TATUM: Oh. Yes.

4 MS. DAVIS: Sorry.

5 SUPT. TATUM: Yes.

6 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

7 SUPT. TATUM: Do we need to start over?

8 MS. DAVIS: No, no, no. You're good if you said
9 yes to it. Sorry.

10 SUPT. TATUM: Okay. So at this time we would
11 like to show our presentation. At the end we'll
12 speak. Is that okay?

13 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Yes, ma'am.

14 SUPT. TATUM: Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Tatum.

16 SUPT. TATUM: So Gwendolyn Bryant will go
17 through research as this is going on.

18 MS. BRYANT: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Gwendolyn Bryant and I'm going to be speaking a
20 little bit on the first aspects of the presentation,
21 and the first thing is about the students'
22 attendance. The reason that we are asking for this
23 is because many of our students are of an older age
24 and they are working adults. Some of them are head-
25 of-households; some of them have two, three children

1 that they are tending to. So when you have these
2 kinds of things that are impacting attendance we have
3 to do things and have to have measures in order to
4 address it.

5 And so, in addition to that, we're planning on
6 this particular aspect to improve learning for our
7 students because we're going to be extending the days
8 on Tuesday and Thursday, which will allow scaffolding
9 efforts and allow differentiated learning for our
10 students as well; allow teachers to do scaffolding
11 measures within the classroom, as well as co-
12 teaching. That will help retention with our students
13 in their academic areas. We expect a boost in
14 academics because we are expecting a boost in
15 attendance. We're also expecting for our students to
16 be able to be more present, which will help retention
17 with their academics and their learning.

18 A four-day school week does not mean less class
19 time; it actually will be spread out in the earlier
20 part of the week. It's just we're going to have an
21 extended day or two extended days so that we can
22 spread that time out throughout the week. And that's
23 just a little bit of statistics based on four-day
24 school weeks.

25 SUPT. TATUM: So what you see, we've been

1 working with ADE School Improvement Specialist
2 Sharesa White, and due to our uniqueness she said,
3 "What's your main barrier that you're facing?" Well,
4 we've just been all over attendance this year because
5 to date we only have 12 graduates and we average
6 about 30 or 40. We're known to have two graduations
7 a year, in December and in June, and so the kids --
8 for one thing we have high incarceration this year
9 and then older students, they're not coming to
10 school. So we've been tracking this really back in
11 the spring when I did research on it and you can see
12 -- and I know you guys are seeing a lot of spike
13 right there at the end of -- I mean, in November and
14 December, but we had a lot of seniors who transferred
15 in; they only needed one or two credits. So they're
16 coming every day, even students who only need maybe
17 two credits. So they're attending every day because
18 they're waiting on the December graduation. So we
19 ended up getting 12 finished, then the spike just
20 dropped; kind of also those that didn't make it but
21 we had already planned to make it. You know, I don't
22 know if they kind of give up but then they're like,
23 "I'm not coming on Fridays; you know, I start to work
24 on Fridays." So for them in this population, in this
25 unique model, their workweek starts Friday. I mean,

1 they may work one or two days during the week but we
2 can bet they're going to be out. So on Fridays --
3 since then, you know, 19% attendance, you know, on
4 Fridays. So we broke it down by grade level and in
5 your packet you will see the numbers. I think it was
6 50 or something for the 9th graders. One thing we
7 need to realize, this is not a traditional school;
8 it's as nontraditional as you can get. So 9th grade,
9 they're 17 and 18; they're not 14 and 15. I mean,
10 they're adults. You know, we're open-entry, open-
11 exit. We enroll new students every day. Since the
12 first of the month we've enrolled 12 new students --
13 12. So, you know, I know people say, "What are you
14 going to do with those 9th graders?" Well, they're
15 adults. We have about -- I think Ms. Taylor pulled
16 about 18 or 20 actual 15 -- most of those are 16 and
17 our kids work. But you can see the spike is broken
18 down in the numbers and you'll see who was attending,
19 like I said, during November and December.

20 So we use Valley Catering for our meal service.
21 So, in November our bill for breakfast and lunch for
22 one month was \$1200; February it's \$500. So, you
23 know, I'm thankful they're able to let us change the
24 numbers; they understand our open-entry/open-exit.
25 They don't need to fix food for 100 kids when only 25

1 are there. So we're able -- but we've been doing
2 that all year-long and I just wanted to give you a
3 snapshot of that.

4 MS. BRYANT: In order for us to address our
5 students and address things that are barriers to our
6 students what we have to do is do a survey with our
7 students. They can address their barriers better
8 than we can. So when we did our survey we saw that
9 49% of our respondents were missing school at least
10 one day a week and that day is usually Friday because
11 of the reasons that Ms. Tatum stated earlier as far
12 as working or having to care for children or having
13 to get into the workplace in order to make their
14 money, because some of them are head-of-household.
15 You can see as well that students who attend less
16 than five days there were 74%. Of those percentages
17 of students, what you will find is that many of them
18 have transportation barriers. So we have that broken
19 down on the next slide.

20 So you will see that we ask them personally --
21 you know -- they had a very confidential way of
22 answering these questions so that they would not tell
23 off on themselves or, you know, put their personal
24 business out there or anything. But we did want to
25 know, seriously, what are your barriers to being able

1 to attend school, and these were the top responses
2 that we received from our students that took our
3 survey. So you see that having to work or personal
4 issues at home, lack of transportation, those are the
5 ones that are falling at the top, but we can't
6 necessarily address all of those. But we do try to
7 address other wraparound services for our students
8 that might, you know, have drug addiction or may have
9 depression or need mental or behavioral therapy
10 services as well.

11 SUPT. TATUM: So before we go to the next slide,
12 we pride ourselves on -- I don't know what it's
13 called, but we just wrap our arms around our kids.
14 And to see -- of the students who took the survey
15 zero were being bullied -- and bullying is huge in
16 school districts now. Middle school on up, kids are
17 bullying; students have taken their lives. So here
18 they just kind of fit in. I asked Ms. Taylor to pull
19 the numbers of ALE students. I think we're up to 46
20 students from other alternative schools and three
21 that registered this week come from North Little Rock
22 Academy. So they were actually looking for the
23 alternative room, although we have an alternative
24 program approved, and I say, "You just sit right
25 there with regular kids and do your work." But we

1 pride our-self on that. And on the other -- students
2 out there would take the survey on a Google doc. You
3 know, they would come to the office and they said,
4 "Ms. Tatum, I did Other." And I said, "Why did y'all
5 mark Other? They were like, "I didn't have any clean
6 clothes," you know. And, I mean, it's really sad;
7 it's very sad. And another young man said, "Well,
8 you know, both of my parents are incarcerated, so I
9 have to catch a ride or bum a ride to go see them
10 when I can." So we try not to ask too many
11 questions. A lot of these we're not prepared for the
12 answers.

13 MS. BRYANT: So here we have listed some
14 benefits of a four-day week, and so flexibility with
15 the students' work schedule so they're able to attend
16 work a little bit more and attend school a little bit
17 more, as well. It also helps with childcare for
18 students who have difficulties getting someone to
19 watch their child five days a week, especially on
20 Fridays when most persons are trying to do their own
21 agendas; you know, that frees up that flexibility for
22 our students. And the extended day will also help
23 students who are close to a deadline, help keep them
24 engaged longer and also give them opportunities to
25 work with teachers on a more personable basis because

1 there will be time for student-based learning; there
2 will be time for peer interventions; there will be
3 time for scaffold learning within the classroom.
4 There will be time for a lot of things that teachers
5 will be able to do with the students within the
6 classroom. It also increases academic retention
7 because they will be there longer during the school
8 day in the earlier part of the week and will not miss
9 that information that they would have missed on
10 Friday anyway.

11 SUPT. TATUM: So some incentives: since our
12 students wear uniforms, and we like for them to be --
13 to show their own personal side, we offer dress-down
14 passes. Teachers can hand those out at any time
15 during the week and they can wear those at any time
16 -- dress down at any time during the week. So they
17 really work hard, because I wouldn't have liked to
18 wear uniforms; I want to wear my own clothes and
19 shoes. And so those are big. We just had a huge
20 pizza party for 34 kids who were able to dress down
21 and participate in the party for making reading and
22 math gains. SIATech t-shirts, the blue t-shirts,
23 they love those; they can wear those at any time. We
24 always highlight a Student of the Month. And we have
25 students who become peer leaders or ambassadors and

1 those students we'll pull from class to show
2 potential prospective students around or parents and
3 let them answer the questions. We step back and let
4 the students take ownership of their school and, of
5 course, their learning.

6 So we put that slide in there for graduates. As
7 you can see, like I said earlier, to date 12. And of
8 those 12 I meant to say that we have about, I think,
9 8 to 10 that's incarcerated that's one credit away,
10 1.5 credits away. So we're trying to work with
11 probation officers to see if we can get them back on
12 campus.

13 Before I go on any further, I'd like to bring
14 Brooke Turner up. She's a DYS case manager out of
15 Saline County.

16 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Ms. Turner, please
17 identify yourself for the record please.

18 MS. DIGBY: Hi. I am Brooke Turner Digby
19 actually, I just got married not long ago, and I work
20 for Saline County. I am a DYS advocate provider and
21 I provide case management services for juvenile
22 delinquents of Saline County. I came into contact
23 with SIATech approximately six months ago or so, and
24 it has really been a life-saver for a lot of my kids.
25 My kids average 40 to 60 hours of community service;

1 they have to randomly be drug screened throughout the
2 week; they are ordered into individual and family
3 counseling services; they also have to maintain
4 employment. And it's really hard to do all the
5 things they are being ordered to do when they have to
6 go to school five days a week and go to work. It's
7 like, where do you find all the time to do these
8 things that the Judges are asking these kids to do?

9 I think it would be really beneficial if they
10 had Friday off in order to meet with their counselor
11 or get in the extra eight hours of community service.
12 Judges like to see -- they expect them to get in
13 anywhere from 15 to 20 hours in a week or two period
14 of time, which is almost impossible, and that's
15 picking up a couple of hours after school each day.
16 And then having to find the community service is
17 really hard these days, as well; a lot of people
18 don't want my kids coming into their place and
19 working for them.

20 And not to mention, before I took this position
21 with DYS I personally worked in an ALE environment
22 and I can't express how stressful it can be day-in
23 and day-out working in that type of environment from
24 a provider's perspective. I think the staff would
25 work better and be more refreshed if they too have a

1 day off for that Friday just to catch up on paperwork
2 and notes and documentation or whatever it was to
3 prepare for the following week. I know on Fridays I
4 was probably ready to pull my hair out at the end of
5 the day.

6 So I hope that helps. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Turner.

8 SUPT. TATUM: And, Dr. Gotcher, before I go any
9 further I would like for the board members to know
10 that in 1997 Saratoga went to a four-day school week.
11 And it was voted on unanimously by our board -- by
12 their board, which our board -- we brought that up to
13 the board. And for reason one -- and I think things
14 that were not resolved in 1997 could be resolved in
15 2017. And one thing that the superintendent at that
16 time said was that ADE had trouble tracking students'
17 attendance and finances because the computer system
18 was not set up for extended days. So I'm thinking
19 that's in '97, so in 2017 -- I pulled Mr. Diggs'
20 entire article off -- it's very interesting; but he
21 also noted that staff attendance was down 50% and
22 student attendance was down -- was up 25%. And the
23 only reason why they selected Monday instead of
24 Friday was because of athletics. But as we all know
25 at the Department that school merged with Mineral

1 Springs, I think. I think they still have an
2 elementary school but maybe just one high school, if
3 I'm speaking right. So we put in your -- we put on
4 the slide but we didn't get a chance to put it in the
5 pamphlet our October 1 numbers, so I asked Ms. Perry
6 to pass those out to you. So if you look at October
7 1 where we submitted how many students that we have,
8 I asked Ms. Taylor to explain to me -- I said, "Now
9 those look like those students we're pulling from the
10 districts," but that's their last school that they
11 attended. So they could be 19 or whatever, but their
12 last school that they attended that's what goes on
13 here, on their record. And even -- and now the
14 enrollment that she pulled today, on the bottom
15 that's today; that's the latest that you can get,
16 still from being in Bryant. Ms. Turner has enrolled
17 about four students into SIATech. And the first time
18 I met her we had a young man who was facing 10 years
19 in prison. His mother would not come get him. He
20 had to be at her office by 4:30 or be locked up in
21 Benton. And so no one was left at school but the
22 registrar and myself, and I just said, "Load up,
23 let's go to Benton," you know. And, I mean, I
24 couldn't believe it, but you just won't believe how
25 many parents would say, "They're grown," that they

1 don't have the support. But I did not want that
2 child to go to jail just because he didn't have
3 adequate transportation. But, you know, we just try
4 to meet the need.

5 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Any further on your
6 presentation? That was the last slide?

7 SUPT. TATUM: That was it. We have a student
8 who would like to speak.

9 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Sure.

10 SUPT. TATUM: She's extremely bashful.

11 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: I'll just say we have two-
12 and-a-half minutes, so that would be great.

13 SUPT. TATUM: You've got two minutes.

14 MS. PIPPINS: Hello. My name is Bianca Pippins.
15 I am a SIATech student. I have a job and a four-year
16 old son. I've been with SIATech -- did y'all hear
17 what I said or do I have to repeat it?

18 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Try one more time, Ms.
19 Pippins.

20 MS. PIPPINS: Okay. Sorry. My name is Bianca
21 Pippins and I'm a SIATech student. I have a job and
22 a four-year old son, and I've been with SIATech since
23 August. I need seven-and-a-half more credits left to
24 graduate and extended hours would help me more. That
25 way, I could get more work in and I could have help

1 from my teachers. And Fridays would help me because
2 I work a double-shift so I can get more hours in and
3 that way I can support me and my son, because I'm a
4 single parent. Thank you. That was all.

5 SUPT. TATUM: How old are you, Bianca?

6 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Pippins.
7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 MS. PIPPINS: I am 20.

9 SUPT. TATUM: Oh, you just turned 20.

10 MS. PIPPINS: I just turned 20. Yes.

11 SUPT. TATUM: Right, right.

12 MS. PIPPINS: Yeah.

13 SUPT. TATUM: But you're on one last credit?

14 MS. PIPPINS: Yes. I have a few more credits
15 left and I'll be graduating.

16 SUPT. TATUM: Right.

17 MS. PIPPINS: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Pippins.

19 SUPT. TATUM: That's as loud as she gets. I was
20 shocked; "You want to speak to the Panel, really?
21 You don't speak to us." No, but she's a sweetheart.
22 We're excited that she will be graduating here in the
23 next couple of weeks.

24 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: That's amazing. Thank
25 you.

1 Since we have a little over a minute left,
2 you're welcome -- or we can just cease that piece and
3 we'll see if there's any other testimony from your
4 team.

5 SUPT. TATUM: I have one of my math teachers
6 with me.

7 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Okay.

8 SUPT. TATUM: She would love to speak. She's
9 very quiet too, so --

10 MS. ROMERO: Hi. I'm Lisa Romero. I'm a math
11 teacher at SIATech. Mainly, I'm very excited about
12 this for the students that we can help. But I know
13 the main thing that comes to my mind after we talked
14 about it was what about the students who already come
15 on Fridays and what's going to happen to them. And
16 our curriculum is actually delivered through
17 Schoology, which is successful outside of the school
18 environment, so they would still be allowed to work.
19 Almost every class has something they can work on
20 during that time. And we also have through our
21 organization a program called Helpline that they can
22 access away from campus that gives them access to
23 teachers who are online. So they could even still
24 get some assistance during the hours on Friday,
25 during the school hours on Friday. And also we can

1 track who actually did log on, so we can check in
2 with them on Monday when we return to school. So,
3 that was it.

4 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Romero.

5 SUPT. TATUM: And, in summary, I know you always
6 say, "If they're that poor, they probably don't have
7 internet at home," but our kids' phones are nicer
8 than all of ours. So we have a Schoology app that
9 they log into on their phone, that they download and
10 log into, and they're able to work. And like she
11 said, we can track progress. You know, it's just
12 like a no-brainer for us to try to implement this
13 now. You may say, "Why now?" Let's take a run to
14 see -- school is almost out -- see if it's really
15 going to boost attendance, you know. And that's it.

16 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Tatum.

17 SUPT. TATUM: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Do we have
19 anyone in opposition that would like to speak at this
20 time?

21 All right. Ms. Tatum, you have 5 additional
22 minutes to close if you would like.

23 SUPT. TATUM: In closing, we've been before the
24 Charter Panel and the State Board so many times I
25 feel like I know you guys personally. But, I mean, I

1 love this job. It's probably the hardest job I've
2 ever had in my whole entire life but the most
3 rewarding. I've never worn this many hats, nor do I
4 want to, because I'm getting too old to keep doing
5 this. So hopefully one of these young ladies can
6 take over. But I would like -- if Ms. Bryant needs
7 to add anything, you know -- but we love our
8 students, so --

9 MS. BRYANT: Yeah. Just to piggyback off what
10 Ms. Tatum said, we do literally track our students.
11 We love them. We want to help them. We have -- we
12 are no strangers to knowing where we are. We're in
13 the 72209 area code. We're over there for a reason;
14 these students are the ones that we're trying to
15 reach. And if you were to look at the statistics and
16 the data you would see that the crime in that area
17 goes up around the spring. So if we give them an
18 opportunity to be at school a little bit more, give
19 them an opportunity to be educated a little bit more,
20 then maybe we can make them a graduate instead of a
21 statistic. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Very good. Thank you.
23 Thank you, Ladies, and thank you for all of your team
24 members that are willing to testify.

25 All right. That concludes the presentation at

1 this time.

2 Panel, opportunity for questions from you. All
3 right. Dr. Saunders will start us off.

4 DR. SAUNDERS: I think, first, if I could have
5 Legal come up -- could you help me? I'm having some
6 trouble trying to understand exactly what's being
7 requested, any new waivers and rescinding any old
8 waivers, just if you could address that?

9 MS. DAVIS: Right. And their application, when
10 it first came in I was a little confused as well.
11 And you-all have to correct me if I'm wrong, but what
12 they're requesting is to rescind the waiver of the
13 rules governing four-day weeks --

14 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

15 MS. DAVIS: -- because they currently have that.
16 But because they're not operating on a four-day week
17 they're requesting that you approve them to operate
18 from a five -- go down to a four-day week. So it's a
19 rescission of one waiver and then just a change in
20 their operation.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Is there still a request to
22 rescind 6-16-102?

23 MS. DAVIS: No.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: No?

25 MS. DAVIS: They -- that was in their original

1 letter.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

3 MS. DAVIS: Because they currently have that and
4 so that still deals with the six-hour instructional
5 day. So we're going to -- we think that they still
6 need that one.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: So the only adjustment to waivers
8 is the --

9 MS. DAVIS: The rescinsion.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: -- rescinsion of that one set of
11 rules?

12 MS. DAVIS: That's correct.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: Or any -- there's no additions
14 here; correct?

15 MS. DAVIS: Not at this time. No.

16 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. That clarifies. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. Thank you.

19 Ms. Haley.

20 MS. HALEY: I just had a question on what you-
21 all have done or plan to do to prepare the teachers
22 for this change. Because sometimes just moving to an
23 extended day doesn't wind up being as effective as
24 you might like, if you haven't put the time in on the
25 front-end. So I'm just wondering what that looks

1 like?

2 SUPT. TATUM: You're so correct and thank you
3 for that question. Actually, the teachers brought
4 the idea to me. So they said, "Look at this, we have
5 this waiver." We've been looking at all these
6 numbers with our school leadership team meetings, so
7 I just provided them with a list of waivers. So we
8 started pulling the numbers back in the fall with our
9 students and where they are, and we've just been so
10 down, you know, with only 12 graduates. So they were
11 looking forward to it. All my teachers have small
12 children. Ms. Bryant has a 10-year old; Ms. Romero
13 has a terrible-two; Ms. Taylor -- I mean, everybody
14 has small children, so they're able to schedule
15 appointments. Now extended year people on an 11- or
16 12-month contract, yeah, we would still work on
17 Fridays. The school will still be open. You know,
18 like she said, we can set up counseling appointments,
19 whatever therapeutic services, but the teachers will
20 all have to work on Tuesday to 6:00, 6:30, and
21 Thursday. So they're -- I mean, they voted
22 unanimously on it. So, you know, we've been tweaking
23 this and trying to get it right, to make sure that we
24 want to try to test the waters, since -- for about
25 three months now.

1 MS. BRYANT: In addition to that, Ms. Haley, our
2 teachers have spent time on BloomBoard, IDEAS, and
3 they've pulled all of this really good useful
4 information that can be used for our population. But
5 we need the time, and so this gives them the time to
6 collaborate together to see how they can use their
7 time to differentiate that learning within that time
8 period and be able to do any kind of activities.
9 Because our population, they do respond better to
10 hands-on and a variety of styles, so this gives our
11 teachers an opportunity to be able to do that within
12 that classroom, within that time period.

13 MS. HALEY: So on those days that are longer,
14 y'all are planning like what that's going to look
15 like from 3:30 to whatever?

16 MS. BRYANT: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. HALEY: Yeah. Okay.

18 MS. BRYANT: Yes, ma'am. The teachers already
19 have ideas that they want to use and it's just about
20 -- kind of -- they're holding them and waiting for
21 the green light. And then we're going to get
22 together, have a meeting and decide exactly what
23 we're going to do within that time period and which
24 ideas, and learning that we're going to do within
25 that time period.

1 MS. HALEY: Thank you.

2 SUPT. TATUM: One other thing, Ms. Haley -- Ms.
3 Bryant applied for and was awarded a grant, fitness
4 grant, so we have a SIATech FIT program there. Right
5 now, the yoga instructors come and we pull students
6 that are -- well, you --

7 MS. BRYANT: Yes. It's with the Blue Cross Blue
8 Shield "Blue and You" Foundation, and we were awarded
9 that particular grant to implement some type of
10 services for our students. So we focused on those
11 students that were high-anxiety, students that were
12 very -- had a lot of barriers or maybe very
13 introverted and we know they're dealing with a lot at
14 home. And so we are having instructors come during
15 the week to do yoga and meditation with them, which
16 is new; for 99% of them it's new, but they're really
17 taking to it. And one of the teachers has already
18 reported a decline in behavior from the participants
19 that have been within the program. And that will
20 give us an opportunity to do a little bit more
21 physical activity with them on Fridays, as well, for
22 those that would be attending and be able to plan
23 that out a little better.

24 MS. HALEY: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Dr. Pfeffer.

1 DR. PFEFFER: So you-all mentioned that one of
2 the outcomes you expect from this is better
3 attendance, and I would agree. You also mentioned
4 with better attendance you would expect higher levels
5 of achievement. Are there any other measurable
6 outcomes that you-all are going to be looking toward?
7 Because I know you're going to want to look back, not
8 just a few months from now but within the next couple
9 of years to really see how successful this has been.
10 So, do you -- are there some other measurable
11 objectives that you all have set to look at the
12 success?

13 SUPT. TATUM: At this point in time we just want
14 to get them there. Because we know if they're not at
15 school they're probably into something they shouldn't
16 be, just to be honest.

17 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

18 SUPT. TATUM: So I'm sure attendance -- students
19 who fight at all these other schools -- you know --
20 we pride our-self and kind of stick our chest out,
21 we've had three fights since we've been open on
22 campus. But, you know, a lot of students say, "This
23 is a second chance school, so don't mess it up." So,
24 you know, attendance, having graduates, they see that
25 we work with Goodwill and other entities who come in

1 and prepare our kids for interviews, but they want to
2 work. And students who are labeled at-risk have an
3 at-risk parent or adult who has failed them. Trust
4 me, they don't want to act like that. So attendance
5 right now -- and we hope -- you know -- teacher
6 morale I don't think is low because they come to work
7 every single day. On the ADE teacher survey we
8 scored a 3.9 aggregate; students had a 3.8. So, you
9 know, we really stress -- we just survey them so
10 much; they just finished another survey. But my
11 staff is pretty vocal and they will just come to me
12 and say, you know, "That didn't work; let's look at
13 this as a group." But right now we just want to get
14 them to school.

15 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And I would just encourage
16 you just -- I know you've already got some good data
17 on the numbers, the percent of your students who do
18 work. But I think it would be very helpful for us in
19 the future if you could -- as many things as you
20 could put into place and share that information on,
21 you know, the success of this, that would be good for
22 us as well.

23 SUPT. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

24 DR. PFEFFER: So, thank you.

25 SUPT. TATUM: And even as Ms. Romero said, there

1 should've been some reduction in there to show -- of
2 our high anxiety students who've been in yoga. It's
3 kind of funny to see the guys in there, you know,
4 because they're behind closed doors, so they don't
5 even want me to see them. And I'm thinking I need to
6 do it too; I'm high stress also. But they've already
7 reported, like she said, a change in their
8 personalities in the room and everything, so --

9 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Panel Members, any other
11 questions?

12 Motion at appropriate time.

13 Oh, sorry. Ms. Haley. Sorry.

14 MS. HALEY: I just had one more question. So I
15 noticed you have three students with IEPs.

16 SUPT. TATUM: Uh-huh.

17 MS. HALEY: So have you planned to conference
18 with them and/or their parents, if they're not 18
19 yet, about the change? Because it would affect their
20 services too.

21 MS. BRYANT: Absolutely. For those students --
22 they were kind of the first ones that were in my mind
23 when we were doing this because I'm like, yeah, yeah,
24 I can be with them longer. But we are going to have
25 that conference. We are going to -- one is under 18,

1 the others are above, so we are going to have that
2 conference. I did want to suggest -- or not suggest,
3 but to say that we have a very good RTI program that
4 we implement from the moment they walk in through the
5 door. And that is an area that we'll be able to
6 increase or really look at, because I know that we do
7 have low special education numbers. I think that's a
8 great thing because we have a very impactful RTI
9 program and that's one of the reasons. And so we do
10 -- we are going to have those meetings and follow all
11 IDEA guidelines when it comes to making sure that all
12 students are appropriately served, and then also look
13 at any other kind of community-based or wraparound
14 services we'll be able to provide on Friday as well.

15 MS. HALEY: I was going to ask you about your
16 numbers, so thank you. A lot of kids would already
17 be placed by the time they would reach high school,
18 so I would just encourage you to make sure in all
19 your advertisement that you talk about the services
20 you provide for IEPs, because I think you'd be
21 meeting the needs of some kids that may not know that
22 that's --

23 MS. BRYANT: Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. HALEY: -- available.

25 MS. BRYANT: Yes, ma'am.

1 SUPT. TATUM: And, Ms. Haley, to piggyback off
2 of that, she talked about our -- I've got a frog in
3 my throat -- our RTI program. But all of our kids
4 are on that program, every kid, not just her special
5 ed. kids. She sends out a Google doc with their
6 names, each teacher submits, and so we can find out
7 what the need is.

8 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Anyone, questions? Mr.
9 Rogers.

10 MR. ROGERS: It's not -- just wondering,
11 something that you said earlier that now made me have
12 a question; you asked -- you said earlier that when
13 your kids aren't in school they get in trouble. So
14 what happens if we give them another day out of
15 school?

16 SUPT. TATUM: We're going to try to make sure
17 they're employed, willfully employed. And, I mean --
18 and they work, so, I mean, they can go to work
19 earlier. Instead of just sleeping in and goofing off
20 and getting into mischief they can go to work on
21 Friday, if they don't have any appointments or
22 community service. Good question. I mean, we have a
23 young lady who just had a baby -- well, the baby is
24 about six months old. On Friday she went to work at
25 10:00, got off at 10:00 at night; 18 years old. So

1 that's many of them that work 12 hours.

2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right, Panel. Last
3 call for questions.

4 All right, Panel. We have a decision to
5 approve, disapprove, or take the matter under
6 advisement until a future meeting.

7 Ms. Davis, are there any other remaining issues
8 regarding the requested waivers?

9 MS. DAVIS: No. But I have yoga mats in my
10 trunk; so whenever we're ready, I've got two.

11 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Okay.

12 MS. DAVIS: I'm ready.

13 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. That's good to
14 know. Make a note of that, Ms. Hill, in the
15 transcript.

16 All right. I'll accept a motion regarding the
17 request at this time, Panel.

18 MS. SMITH: I make a motion to accept the
19 amendments as requested.

20 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Motion by Ms. Smith.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

22 DR. PFEFFER: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Second, I have -- the tie
24 goes to Dr. Saunders. It's been seconded by Dr.
25 Saunders.

1 DR. PFEFFER: Why?

2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Because he was just a --
3 because he's younger.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Oh, I don't know about that.

5 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: That did not come out just
6 right; that didn't -- I must --

7 DR. PFEFFER: I'm glad our official Chair is in
8 the back of the room here.

9 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: I'm no longer chair; I
10 just got fired.

11 All right. Second by Dr. Saunders.

12 All right.

13 All right. All in favor of the motion?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: And all opposed same sign.

16 All right. The motion passed. Congratulations.

17 And each board member will complete the online
18 form at this time.

19 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

20 MS. SMITH: Ms. Pippins, Bianca Pippins, come
21 here. Bianca, come up here real quick before you get
22 out that back door.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: The girl is scared to death.

24 MS. SMITH: I just want to say congratulations
25 to you for your perseverance in continuing to go to

1 school because you staying in there will do more for
2 your son than anything else. And I hope that when
3 you get your graduation credits that you'll let us
4 know because I would love to come see you graduate.

5 MS. PIPPINS: Thank you.

6 MS. SMITH: So, congratulations to you.

7 [APPLAUSE]

8 MS. SMITH: In fact, I'm pretty sure we could
9 probably get a vanload of people from here to come
10 watch you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Smith. And
12 thank you, Ms. Pippins, for being with us today.

13 MS. PIPPINS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: All right. We've got --
15 all right. Ms. Haley.

16 MS. HALEY: I voted to approve the amendment. I
17 think it will allow more flexibility for a unique
18 group of students. I do encourage SIATech to monitor
19 the attendance gains closely, and other related
20 outcomes, and advertise your services.

21 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Mr. Lester.

22 MR. LESTER: I voted for the amendment. I
23 believe it was planned well and it will address the
24 variety of needs of many of the students.

25 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: And Dr. Pfeffer.

1 DR. PFEFFER: I voted for the amendment. I
2 believe that there's a solid plan for the use of the
3 time and I would encourage the school to monitor the
4 data.

5 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Mr. Rogers.

6 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. It allows the charter
7 to continue working to meet the unique needs of their
8 student population.

9 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I have no concerns. I voted for,
11 for the same reasons stated before.

12 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: And finally, Ms. Smith.

13 MS. SMITH: I voted for. Thoughtful explanation
14 of the innovation using a four-day week with extended
15 day options to address the needs of specific students
16 that you serve.

17 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Tatum. I
18 just want to just give, in closing -- as I typically
19 do, I look at the mission statement of the schools
20 and the piece that stood out to me that you guys are
21 demonstrating is a relationship-focused campus.
22 That's very evident. It's evident in Ms. Pippins
23 being here and your wonderful team representing. So
24 congratulations, thank you, and keep up the wonderful
25 work for these kids. Have a great day. Thank you.

1 SUPT. TATUM: Thank you all.

2 CHAIRPERSON GOTCHER: Panel, we'll take a 5-
3 minute recess to allow the transition, since I have
4 been fired as chair, and we will move to bring Ms.
5 Coffman back up. So a 5-minute break, please.

6 (BREAK: 2:50 - 2:56 P.M.)

7 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Saunders left the
8 meeting during the break.)

9 A-3: HEARING AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER:
10 ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, you're
12 recognized for Action Item 3.

13 MS. MARY PERRY: Good afternoon. I'm Mary
14 Perry, Coordinator with the Division of Learning
15 Services. And here this afternoon our third item
16 deals with a hearing for Rockbridge Montessori
17 School.

18 On February 16th, Rockbridge was notified that
19 the Charter Authorizing Panel wanted them to appear
20 today so that the Panel could conduct a full review
21 of their charter. And the possible actions were
22 outlined in the letter to them, including placing the
23 school on probation, modifying the open enrollment
24 charter, or revoking the charter. And you can see
25 the specific areas of concern that were addressed

1 were special education, governance, and financial
2 concerns.

3 Before the group comes up this morning -- and it
4 will be Sarah Gober with the charter that will be
5 beginning the presentation -- I will tell you that we
6 are aware of some things that have occurred since the
7 letter went to the charter. We have been informed --
8 and you'll see that in the presentation today in the
9 slides that were prepared for you by the charter --
10 they will tell you they now have seven members of
11 their governing board, which was what was outlined in
12 the charter application, outlined and approved. As
13 far as some of the -- as to the Open Enrollment
14 Charter Public School Grant, the federal grant, just
15 yesterday a payment was received -- was released from
16 the Department in the amount of \$57,585.80. That
17 number is referenced in their presentation as well,
18 and that is definitely accurate that that money is
19 going their way. They probably have not seen it yet;
20 it was just completely released yesterday.

21 With those things said, I will tell you that the
22 level of concern remains high with the Arkansas
23 Department of Education Charter Office. There is
24 still concern over such things as open meetings and
25 posting of meetings and notifying folks about

1 meetings. There is -- there remains concern about
2 data and finance. As early as this morning I was
3 copied on an email that went to the superintendent,
4 still trying -- where the Finance Unit is trying to
5 get an accurate and complete December 1 special ed.
6 count. So there are some things that are still very
7 concerning that we're aware of.

8 And with that I will turn it over to you, Chair,
9 so that you -- Madam Chair, so that you can swear
10 those of us in who might be providing testimony.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, if you'll give
12 us the rundown of our expectations.

13 MS. DAVIS: Right. The procedures that you're
14 going to follow today are a little different than the
15 two you just did. After being sworn in -- and that
16 does include Department staff -- anybody outside of
17 attorneys that are providing testimony does need to
18 be sworn in. The applicant will have 20 minutes to
19 present its response to any proposed action that
20 could be taken today. After the 20 minutes will then
21 be any questions by you that you can have as a
22 department, or then there's no opposition or rebuttal
23 time. At that point you can then make your decision
24 or you can refer it to another meeting.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And I have a list of names

1 that have signed up for public comment.

2 MS. DAVIS: At the end of the discussion, we
3 generally can take public comment. That's at the end
4 of your discussion, as well. At the end of your
5 discussion, public comment would be three minutes per
6 person.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

8 MS. SMITH: Just to clarify, did you say that
9 ADE staff had to swear in also?

10 MS. DAVIS: Yes, if they were going to be
11 providing any testimony.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. So just based on the
13 expectation of questions that I probably have for the
14 Charter Unit, can we just make sure that they all
15 swear -- the entire Charter Unit swears in?

16 MS. DAVIS: I think that that's what they were
17 planning to do --

18 MS. SMITH: Okay.

19 MS. DAVIS: -- just to be on the safe side.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And go over again what our
21 options are.

22 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Your options are: you can
23 place them on probation, you can modify their
24 charter, you can revoke their charter, or you can
25 take no action. You can also choose to table the

1 decision, if you want, until a further meeting or
2 make a decision at a future meeting.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

4 MS. HALEY: Ms. Davis, could I ask the same for
5 the Special Ed. staff? There are several members
6 here also, so if they could just be sworn in.

7 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. Like I say, I think pretty
8 much everybody, with the exception of one or two of
9 us, will all be standing up when you ask for
10 everybody, so --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. If all
12 representatives from the charter, from the ADE, and
13 anyone speaking in opposition would please stand,
14 raise your right hand to take the oath. Do you swear
15 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give
16 shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
17 the truth?

18 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 Ms. Gober.

21 I'll ask that each person speaking be sure to
22 speak clearly into the microphone because this
23 session is being recorded and live-streamed.

24 MS. GOBER: Yes. And I will apologize up-front;
25 I have a terrible head cold. Please forgive me and I

1 do apologize. My name is Sarah Gober. I am with
2 Rockbridge Montessori. I'm a 26-year veteran of
3 education in Arkansas.

4 I want to thank the board for allowing us to
5 come forward today and to talk to you about the
6 concerns that you have. We have some of the same
7 concerns. We are a strong educational endeavor as
8 far as we love our children and we want the best for
9 them educationally. We may not be strong in other
10 places, and we want to make sure that we are -- have
11 the right resources in line to get the help that we
12 need to make this successful for our children. We
13 have a small PowerPoint to begin.

14 Basically, we're Rockbridge Montessori. We are
15 a charter school that was given our charter in 2015.
16 We're on the corner of Roosevelt Road and Main
17 Street. Montessori education is over 100 years old.
18 It is research-based education -- that is, a hands-on
19 material-based education. It is based on choice.
20 That is not choice on whether I do it or not do it;
21 it is based on education and choice on what would I
22 like to work on today and how deep of learning would
23 I like to do with that today. And that gives the
24 child a chance to do what they would like to today
25 and go as far as they would like to go with no limits

1 of time or ability. We currently serve 151 students
2 in K-6. We have 73% that are free-and-reduced lunch.
3 We have 82% that are minority. We have had good
4 gradual growth. We started with a number of 119
5 students when we began school last year. We finished
6 the school year with 134, and we currently have the
7 151.

8 We have five teachers and five assistants.
9 Three of our teachers are fully AMI certified, and
10 two of those hold Arkansas teacher licensures. To be
11 AMI certified you must go through a three-summer
12 training or a full year training on just Montessori
13 material and pedagogy to be able to receive that AMI,
14 which is Association Montessori Internationale. Two
15 more of our teachers will become fully AMI certified
16 over this summer when they go back and take their
17 final orals and presentations. One of our assistants
18 is an Arkansas licensure teacher with ELL and GT
19 endorsements, and he will receive his AMI
20 certification this summer and will begin our
21 adolescence community for 7th graders in the fall.
22 Two other of our assistants have degrees in
23 education, one in early education and one in
24 elementary education.

25 There is an example of Montessori education.

1 Rather than me getting up at the front of the room
2 and telling you what country this is and where it is
3 in the world, you will have a prepared environment
4 that will give you the country and the countries,
5 continents, rivers, streams, whatever geography we're
6 working on that day, and then you will identify it on
7 the lower map and identify what it is and be able to
8 identify it. So it's through that self-discovery I
9 have to find that and that puts it into my long-term
10 memory.

11 This is a primary student you would call
12 kindergarten. She is pouring water from one flask to
13 another. This teaches concentration. She can do
14 that well and take the time to do that well. She
15 will take the time to read and not worry about the
16 time that it takes to complete the task and do a math
17 problem and not worry about the time that it takes to
18 complete the task and to do it well.

19 We have held -- we do have three sources of
20 major concern and we understand that. One of them is
21 special education. We have held productive meetings
22 with the members of the ADE educational unit over the
23 finances and the services. There have been no
24 interrupted provisions for those that we outsource;
25 no PT, no OT was interrupted -- no speech therapy, no

1 psychological evaluations. I have applied for my ALP
2 so that -- and I have been accepted. And since that
3 time I have been working diligently with the parents
4 and the ADE and the students to get those students on
5 track and to make up for and to provide that
6 compensatory education for the students that was
7 lacking, as well as we've hired a special ed.
8 teacher. It says we are in the process of engaging;
9 we have employed a special education teacher who will
10 help us outline that compensatory learning, as well
11 as update our IEPs for us and help us move forward.
12 We have completed almost all of our IEP conferences
13 that were asked to be addressed by this time. The
14 others that we have not, it's simply trying to get
15 the parents and staff -- we don't want to do this by
16 telephone or any other way; we want to do it face-to-
17 face with them so that they can understand that we
18 haven't had a certified teacher there during this
19 time, and that we are going to do our very best to
20 help our children, and it was not by our lack of
21 knowledge or concern. And we are preparing a
22 comprehensive plan to address those other issues that
23 are given.

24 We are revising our on-site coding system. That
25 was the issue of some of our financial issues. And

1 that has been taken care of also in working with
2 Complete Consultant [sic] and that is being taken
3 care of so the expenses can be paid.

4 Our second issue was governance. Our charter
5 calls for a governing board composed of seven
6 members, including parent representation. Our actual
7 number of board members have been composed of fewer
8 than seven, but we currently have seven. Our board
9 consists of: Casson Brock, a professor at Pulaski
10 Technical College; Lee Allen, a professor at UAPB;
11 Jeanne Williams, a professor at Pulaski Technical;
12 Stephanie Newton, a liaison to Second Chance Ranch;
13 Roy Albert, retired community member and member of
14 the church to help -- who we own -- who owns our
15 building and rents to us; John Ciak, he is currently
16 with a nonprofit and he is a CPA to help us there;
17 and Randy Sharpe, he's a mortician and he brings
18 humor to the room.

19 Our administrative staff consists of: Mr.
20 Stephen Nuckols, he is currently doing superintendent
21 and principalship; and Shannon Nuckols, curriculum
22 director and teacher. As you will see, I am not
23 currently listed there. I have stepped down to make
24 sure that everything in special ed. is taken care of
25 to the utmost level because that's the most important

1 part is those students.

2 As the -- our governance review, we are drafting
3 policies and protocols to insure the -- insure that
4 the concerns of the state are taken care of for those
5 meeting processes.

6 The legal balance -- as of 03/01/17, our legal
7 balance was \$239,200. The remaining startup federal
8 grant available is \$143,803. As she just said, we've
9 received -- we haven't received in hand, but we have
10 been granted our first submission and we have
11 submitted a second submission for \$51,625.

12 We do have some leadership issues. We hired a
13 Head of School who chose to do something else, and we
14 brought Mrs. Nuckols on. We hired -- when Mr.
15 Stevens left, we hired someone to do our finance and
16 in-house day-to-day bookkeeping and this would allow
17 Mrs. Nuckols to focus on other issues of the
18 classroom. Since that time, Mr. Givens has resigned
19 to go back to his previous job. In the meantime,
20 Mrs. Nuckols, who was leading the school -- we have
21 approached AMI International to become a training
22 site so that we can continue to have fully certified
23 teachers, AMI certified teachers. In order to do
24 that she must fulfill three years of upper
25 elementary. She's been in primary; she must include

1 and teach three years of upper el. So we tried to
2 put her back in the classroom so that we could
3 fulfill that obligation so that we could move
4 forward, so that we could provide teachers not only
5 for us but for other Montessori schools in this area.
6 Currently, we go to Dallas, Atlanta, or California.

7 I came to Rockbridge as a Head of School and Mr.
8 Nuckols came as a teacher, but when our numbers did
9 not materialize Mr. Nuckols -- when Mr. Givens left,
10 Mr. Nuckols took over that particular area because he
11 had done reports. He's in the military; he's a Major
12 in the military, in the National Guard, and he did
13 very well with that and had that experience, and I
14 would try to run the day-to-day side of the
15 education. Since that time, he has taken more of
16 that to give me the time to focus on those issues
17 that the State Department has brought up, mainly
18 special ed.

19 Cuts were made, different things happened. Our
20 special ed. teacher that we had -- her assistant was
21 -- had to be let-go due to money. And then when she
22 found that out, she chose to retire; it was her third
23 retirement. And we have guidelines for all of that,
24 if you would like to see.

25 When we started our year we only had nine

1 returning students that were Montessori, so the issue
2 in front of us is students knowing the Montessori
3 method and getting that in place. We feel like we
4 have made great gains. We have a before-school
5 program for our students. We open our doors at 7:00.
6 We have an aftercare program that goes till 6:00 in
7 the evening. We provide free breakfast and lunch for
8 all of our students. We provide mental health for
9 our students, those that need it. In addition, we
10 have gotten a bus so that we could do our going-outs,
11 which is what Ms. Marie -- Dr. Marie Montessori
12 called those, and it takes children to places and to
13 experience things that they would not otherwise be
14 able to experience. In addition to, we have a
15 basketball team and we do dances, which adds to that
16 idea of community for our school.

17 We are not here to defend the fact that we have
18 made mistakes. We are here to own those mistakes and
19 to recognize that we have failed, but to offer the --
20 to let you know that in that ownership we want to be
21 transparent, that we want to do what's best for the
22 kids and so we want the school to continue for the
23 sake of the children. And we will -- we would love
24 to be -- to continue and have monitoring to show that
25 we want to do what's best for those children.

1 We're going to call some of our -- I have some
2 people with me that would like to speak also. I'm
3 going to start with Mr. Roy Albert; he is a retired
4 person of the community. He is with St. John, which
5 is the church who owns our building and rents to us.
6 He has also just recently accepted our request to be
7 on our board.

8 MR. ALBERT: Good evening. I recently became a
9 member of the board, but I'm speaking more on the
10 impact from the community. I'm a member and a deacon
11 at St. John Baptist Church, which has been a solid
12 member or part of the community for over 125 years.
13 And the Montessori method of teaching was one of the
14 things that interested the church because we are
15 advocates for education in the community. We have a
16 program where we mentor students at Washington
17 Elementary, and we were looking to help the community
18 expand the access and possibility of additional
19 education and different methods of learning because
20 students learn at different methods. And this
21 Montessori method was a new one for the community and
22 we saw that this could be a major asset and that's
23 one of the reasons why we wanted to partner with
24 Rockbridge, and Rockbridge has been an integral part
25 of the community since they have moved in. They have

1 utilized the church and we have partnered with them.
2 As stated, she has a basketball team and we made
3 available to the school the facilities for
4 utilization of their -- you know -- their activities.
5 We've also looked at how we can actually have a
6 better voice in how the school is going to go and
7 that's the reason why I, as a member of the church
8 and the liaison, became a member of this board,
9 looking for ways in which we might be able to impact
10 the community more.

11 So I just wanted to say it's been a rewarding
12 experience to get to know the staff. I've been there
13 with the school from the conception, when they rolled
14 in the first cabinets, and any problems they've had
15 we've worked together with them. And they have had a
16 great impact upon the community and I really would
17 hope that you would consider the impact that they are
18 having and what they bring to the south-end
19 community.

20 MS. GOBER: Thank you, Mr. Albert.

21 Next, I would like to call Jack Ciak, a parent
22 of one of our students.

23 MR. CIAK: Good afternoon. I am Jack Ciak. I'm
24 a member of the board now, but I would like to speak
25 to you today on the role that I cherish a little bit

1 more and that's as father of an elementary student.
2 And if you'll indulge me, I'd like to take you
3 through a little bit of her history. We adopted Olga
4 in 2010 from Guatemala. And when we came back to
5 Little Rock we placed her in, shall we say, a
6 conventional public school where we were told that
7 she was a little bit behind but "give it six months
8 and she'll be all caught up with the rest of her
9 peers." Six months turned to 12; 12 turned to 18.
10 We finally got around to having her tested. We
11 learned that she does have learning disabilities in
12 math and in English but we weren't able to learn what
13 those disabilities were, so she entered the world of
14 special ed. and she struggled.

15 Now I want to share with you, my wife and I are
16 both products of public and private schools and we
17 never had to work at our education. I was able to
18 maintain the honor roll and barely cracked a book,
19 and our two adult children somewhat followed suit.
20 So when we were faced with the prospect of a 1st and
21 2nd grader struggling, crying, fighting over the
22 prospect of doing homework every night, I don't mind
23 telling you I didn't know how to handle that one.
24 And Olga did struggle. We learned of the Montessori
25 school over the summer and enrolled her in

1 Rockbridge, and I can tell you in six or seven short
2 months I now have a daughter who loves to read. Her
3 backpack is full of books and she loves to just pull
4 them out and she's always asking me to buy things.
5 She can now actually interpret signs on the road for
6 me, which is nice. And not that I ever did this, but
7 I don't have to read my texts while I'm driving
8 because she can do that for me now, so it's a big
9 help. And equally, we've seen the progress in her
10 math as well.

11 Now I'm not an educator. I can't tell you why
12 this system works but I can tell you it definitely
13 works for my daughter. I don't know what we would've
14 done without this school. And I can also tell you
15 that while I realize there are private options that
16 teach the Montessori method, I am not ashamed to tell
17 you that I cannot afford them. And while even if my
18 wife and I could make additional sacrifices to place
19 her somewhere else I know that there's a lot of
20 students in this district that don't have that
21 option. And I look at my daughter and I know she's
22 dealing with reactive attachment disorder; I know she
23 spent the first two-and-a-half years of her life in
24 abject poverty in Guatemala. I'm sure I don't have
25 to tell you all of the lasting affects that that will

1 have on one's development, but I also know in this
2 school district that she is not alone in that. And
3 so I'm just here to affirm the fact that I do believe
4 this school provides an incredibly necessary service
5 to an incredibly important population of children.
6 Thank you.

7 MS. GOBER: Thank you, Mr. Ciak.

8 Our next person will be Cecilia Santiago, also a
9 parent.

10 MS. SANTIAGO: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Cecilia Santiago and I came for my son. His name is
12 Ty Garcia. And I like the education myself. I don't
13 have one, currently working. And I had a friend tell
14 me to try to put Ty in a Montessori school system,
15 because he was having troubles in Benton. And at the
16 beginning I would question my son, "What did you
17 learn today?" And he will say, "Nothing, mom." Then
18 I would question him again, "What did you learn
19 today?" And he will say, "Nothing." So I, in
20 return, went to the school and questioned, "What is
21 my son learning," and I came to realize that he did
22 not feel as if he was learning because to him it was
23 more exploring. My son is in the 4th grade; he does
24 6th grade level math, 6th grade reading and writing,
25 and I'm currently enrolled in college and he's

1 helping me learn pre-algebra. And I still don't get
2 the method, like the parent there himself. And I get
3 emotional because we travel far and I get him up at
4 5:00 in the morning, but he wakes up singing and he
5 wants to make sure that he's at school exactly at
6 7:00 because he wants to learn.

7 So they are going through the hiccups and I
8 think that with any new school anybody has to learn.
9 But Rockbridge has not only changed my son's life but
10 it has given me the opportunity to realize that there
11 is other things -- that although I am part of that
12 minority group my son might have a chance to make a
13 difference. Thank you.

14 MS. GOBER: Thank you, Ms. Santiago.

15 Our last one is Christy Evans. She is a trained
16 AMI Montessori teacher. She teaches our primary. I
17 have told her extensively she only has two minutes,
18 which is going to be very hard for her. So you might
19 want to hold on; it's going to be a fast ride.

20 MS. EVANS: Good afternoon. I'm Christy Evans.
21 I am the primary teacher at Rockbridge. I did three
22 summers of training in Dallas. The training there is
23 -- they say is as extensive as a masters level
24 program. We started from conception and learned all
25 the way through 6 years of age, and very extension --

1 a lot of material making of our own to learning
2 Montessori method and to learn the development of the
3 child. Montessori method is an individual-based
4 learning using materials and so we follow the child.
5 We find the passions of the child that will entice
6 the child to learning at a deeper level. We use
7 materials so they are using more senses to truly
8 learn instead of just a rote memorization. Many of
9 the materials we have, such as we offer cursive
10 writing for kindergarten, for the primary, and we see
11 a 3-year old that is learning to color. You'll see
12 them coloring in circles; that will transition easier
13 into a cursive writing, as well as it's a better
14 culturally acceptable form of writing. But it helps
15 them to learn beauty. We also want to use -- we use
16 sandpaper letters, so they're using three different
17 senses just for the letters alone. So they are
18 feeling it, they are seeing it, and they are hearing
19 the sound, so they're using three different senses.
20 Our Montessori method also allows them to move. We
21 have tables and desks for them to use, but we also
22 use rugs. They can get on the floor and move around,
23 a 5-year old, a 3-year old, 4-year old, they can
24 learn as they're moving. They can use both sides of
25 their brain while they're learning and so this helps

1 them to find true concentration with the three-hour
2 work cycle. They are free to continue that work
3 instead of a bell ringing 40 minutes later and
4 saying, "You can't think about this math problem any
5 more; you have to move on to English." So that helps
6 them to complete the work cycle. We offer as well
7 grace and courtesy lessons, practical life exercises
8 to help them fine-tune their motor coordination,
9 their gross motor movements. That helps them in turn
10 with writing, as well as we help them with quantities
11 with their math. So they are actually holding it,
12 they're manipulating the materials instead of just
13 paper; so that helps them as well. All of our
14 materials grow deeper as they get older. I have a
15 son that also goes to the school; he's in 6th grade.
16 And I have material in my room -- I'm hurrying --
17 that is used -- my children see it as a puzzle; it's
18 called binomial and then trinomial cube, and they can
19 take these out and they have to put them back just
20 so. They're using some of these same materials in
21 4th, 5th, and 6th grade, but they're actually
22 breaking those down into the formulas for the
23 binomial and the trinomial and they're learning their
24 pre-algebra and algebra functions and formulas. And
25 with using them in kindergarten, when they get up

1 into 6th grade and they're having to remember these
2 formulas they're remembering and they're holding
3 these and they can put this puzzle together in their
4 mind that they did so many times and then won't have
5 to just try to remember this formula or this
6 function. So all of the materials have a precise
7 need and a precise way to be used and they can -- you
8 can learn deeper parts and learn with -- throughout
9 your whole -- from K through 6. So I see so much --
10 the kids are learning. Most of my kids are reading
11 already. Most of them are counting to 1,000. I have
12 several even starting multiplication tables. So this
13 method does work and I'm so excited that we can share
14 this with children that would not otherwise be able
15 to afford this.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Evans.

17 All right. That concludes our 20-minute
18 presentation, Ms. Davis, and now we'll move to
19 questions from the board, from the Panel.

20 All right. Ms. Haley, you look like you're
21 ready.

22 MS. HALEY: Yes. Thank you, Ms. Gober. We
23 appreciate everything that you've done to work to
24 improve this situation in terms of special education,
25 but we do have some questions. One of those, I saw

1 on the PowerPoint; I think that you mentioned Ms.
2 Cochran, which was the special education teacher --
3 and I don't remember, maybe she was on my copy but I
4 didn't see it. Anyway, what date did she leave?

5 MS. GOBER: She told us -- her official date is
6 the 19th of October.

7 MS. HALEY: Okay.

8 MS. GOBER: She told us two weeks previous to
9 that that she would not be staying without an
10 assistant.

11 MS. HALEY: Okay.

12 MS. GOBER: She was ready to retire.

13 MS. HALEY: And so she had an assistant and then
14 the assistant had to be --

15 MS. GOBER: Reassigned.

16 MS. HALEY: -- reassigned. Okay. And was that
17 because she felt like she had too many kids or she --
18 did she discuss that with you?

19 MS. GOBER: She did not have. It was my
20 understanding we didn't have too many children, but
21 we needed that assistant placed somewhere else
22 because of cutbacks.

23 MS. HALEY: Okay. And so from October 19th
24 until now -- you have several students with IEPs and
25 they -- our understanding is they have not received

1 special ed. services from a licensed special ed.
2 teacher. And maybe -- and I know that you have an
3 ALP that's been submitted; I don't know if you have
4 started services with some of the kids, so I can ask
5 that in a minute. But is that correct? Up until the
6 time that you --

7 MS. GOBER: Yes.

8 MS. HALEY: -- started -- and when was that,
9 when you started providing the services?

10 MS. GOBER: On March -- I found out on the
11 Friday, March 3rd, and so I started that weekend to
12 prepare for the following Monday.

13 MS. HALEY: Okay. And so we sent you a letter,
14 as you know, because I know our staff has been
15 working with you -- not you, but --

16 MS. GOBER: Wonderfully.

17 MS. HALEY: -- the school --

18 MS. GOBER: Yes.

19 MS. HALEY: -- about providing compensatory
20 education and schedules and your schedule and all
21 that. And we're still a little confused about the
22 numbers and we'll -- I have questions about that;
23 I'll give other people a chance. But the major
24 concerns that we had that we stated at the last
25 meeting, or that I stated, was the special education

1 program and the lack of services to students from
2 that point that had not been received since October
3 19th, and just concerns over the ability of
4 Rockbridge to implement a special education program
5 in terms of your capacity.

6 MS. GOBER: Yes.

7 MS. HALEY: At that time you didn't even have an
8 ALP. And not finding fault with anyone, but there
9 wasn't a lot of knowledge in terms of special
10 education in the school, so we've been working with
11 you. So, I'll stop and give other people a chance to
12 ask some questions and then I have some more.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

14 MS. SMITH: Mr. Ciak and Mr. Albert, could I
15 speak to you guys for a second please?

16 So if I heard correctly earlier, you both have
17 just now joined the board?

18 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

19 MR. CIAK: That's correct.

20 MS. SMITH: So have either one of you attended
21 an actual board meeting at this point or have you
22 just been appointed?

23 MR. ALBERT: One board meeting.

24 MS. SMITH: One board meeting?

25 MR. CIAK: One board meeting and one special

1 meeting.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. And can you kind of tell me
3 -- when asked to be a part of the board, can you
4 explain to me what your understanding of your role as
5 a board member would be?

6 MR. ALBERT: I just most recently completed the
7 -- I guess it's the video training and it outlined
8 all of the -- I guess the expectations of how the
9 school should be run, you know, governance, the whole
10 list. And after reading that -- in fact, looking at
11 some of the citings here I had a better understanding
12 from that video training as to what was some of the
13 issues that needed to be addressed here today. And
14 in the meeting we just generally went over things.
15 But the video training that I just completed, that
16 really gave me a lot of insight as to what the
17 expectations are.

18 MS. SMITH: Okay.

19 MR. CIAK: I see my purpose being on the board
20 as two-fold: one, again, I have a daughter in the
21 school, so I'm an interested parent; but also as was
22 stated I am a non-practicing CPA. I work for a
23 nonprofit. I have a lot of experience with boards
24 and governance and obviously the financial part of
25 things is something I'm comfortable with and really

1 administration in general.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you both.

3 MR. ALBERT: I also just want to point out, he
4 did mention administrative, and before I retired I
5 did have 33 years of work in providing services to
6 people with disabilities. So I'm very familiar with
7 the requirements and the needs of students, as well
8 as about 17 years of administrative experience and
9 handling budgets of \$26,000,000. So I do have some
10 knowledge of that.

11 MS. SMITH: Thank you. I appreciate you sharing
12 that.

13 So from the Charter Unit, I guess maybe Mr.
14 Scott -- Mr. Scott, I know you've kind of taken the
15 role of working with different boards. So can you
16 kind of give me some just reflection on kind of where
17 this board currently is and do you feel like they are
18 in place now moving forward? Or kind of just your
19 thoughts on that please, sir.

20 MR. SCOTT: Certainly. I definitely appreciate
21 the opportunity to do just that. It's early on in
22 the process and as -- just for the record, one of our
23 interests is to have a level of understanding of the
24 professional development needs of boards. At the end
25 of the day there's a direct correlation between board

1 governance and performance with school performance.
2 So at the end of the day, again, each one of the
3 board members, as a whole, typically have to assess
4 and hold the superintendent accountable in academics
5 and finance and operations. It's early on in the
6 process and clearly one of the things that was
7 identified as a true need was extensive professional
8 development. I think that is key. Board
9 composition, you take a look at talent around the
10 board. Do you have someone in academics? They do.
11 Do they have someone in finance? They do. Someone
12 in operations? Absolutely. But end of the day, it
13 looks like there's an effort to proceed with
14 professional development with the video, and that's
15 fine, but it's relatively an immature board per se.
16 There's some evidence that point to that relative to
17 an understanding of Open Meetings Act and how to
18 proceed in that manner; there's also evidence
19 relative to the length of the board meetings. To
20 assess in each of those areas to have some comfort
21 level for each of the board members to even make a
22 vote it means that they have had some extensive time
23 covering that. I believe that will be handled over
24 the course of time with extensive professional
25 development. The areas -- they also have access to

1 APSRC; our unit is obviously providing that as well.
2 We're interested in assisting in that manner.

3 MS. SMITH: So just for -- so within the notes
4 that we were provided I noticed that you guys had
5 tried to attend a meeting that did not take place.
6 But then you also requested minutes or notes or who
7 attended the meeting. Did you ever receive those?

8 MR. SCOTT: To answer your question, we did
9 receive it. And the point that you're referencing is
10 at the February 28th this year board meeting a
11 decision was made to have the next board meeting on
12 March 6th. I attended the meeting on March 6th --
13 well, I went to the location on March 6th, only to
14 find out that there was no meeting, that there was a
15 meeting prior to that actually on March 3rd, which
16 was a Friday. So there was no public record that I
17 was aware of that there was a change to that March
18 3rd meeting. And so, again, understanding the Open
19 Meetings Act and state guidelines, state laws,
20 regulations kind-of sort-of point to that.

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you, sir. Who's the
22 current president of the board?

23 MS. SCOTT: It's Ms. Brock.

24 MS. SMITH: Okay. All right. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

1 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Gober, I think these -- my
2 questions will start. And I was going through the
3 presentation and I'm not sure -- no, okay -- the
4 other factors that you referenced where you had
5 different people had been doing different things. So
6 Mr. Nuckols was moved from a classroom to working
7 with eSchool cycle reports, financial issues. You,
8 from what I understand, basically were serving as
9 principal of the school and then now you're serving
10 fulltime as the special education teacher, taking
11 care of all the paperwork, and so that shift has been
12 made. Someone who was over the finance is no longer
13 doing that. And so I'm just -- I'm concerned about
14 the shuffling, and you acknowledged that, and I do
15 appreciate you doing that. And so kind of to go with
16 what Ms. Smith was talking about with board members
17 and how -- like how are these decisions being made in
18 terms of who is in what position and when issues
19 arise? And you've got this shuffling going on, and
20 how are those decisions being made and what kind of
21 involvement is going between people running the
22 school and then the board that should be overseeing
23 the operations?

24 MS. GOBER: Absolutely. Well, you know, it
25 always starts in a conversation in the office, going,

1 you know, "What are we going to do and how are we
2 going to best cover this?" But then we bring it to
3 our board and ask them, you know, how do they think
4 it would be best qualified [sic] and we give -- some
5 of them have educational background, some do not.
6 And then we ask them what they think is the best, and
7 if they ask our opinion we tell them what we think is
8 best, and then they so move.

9 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So at the time when you
10 went for a few months without having a licensed
11 special education teacher, you know, was from, I
12 believe, October until March. And even when the ALP
13 was filed there was still some missing paperwork that
14 had to be followed up on. And you even mentioned,
15 you know, "We have some of the same concerns." So
16 when did you reach out to your board? Did you reach
17 out to the Department? Did we reach out to you? How
18 was all of that done? Because I think that between
19 the governance issue and the leadership and who's
20 making sure that these things are taken care of,
21 that's a concern.

22 MS. GOBER: We had a monitor -- a monitoring
23 occurring about the same time that Mrs. Cochran was
24 leaving.

25 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

1 MS. GOBER: And so with that came the -- came
2 these issues. And as we were trying to find a
3 special ed. teacher, because Ms. Cochran had gone, we
4 had to move forward with the findings that were made
5 in the monitoring and work on those, and so we would
6 let the board know. And during that time we were
7 pursuing special ed. teachers; looking back,
8 obviously -- I'll take the blame -- not as
9 passionately as we should have, but again trying to
10 do what was best for the students and move forward.
11 And the board was aware and had given us an
12 indication that when we found one that they would
13 support us when we -- for hire.

14 DR. PFEFFER: And so you have stated that you
15 have hired a special education teacher now?

16 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

17 DR. PFEFFER: Is that person fully licensed?

18 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. When will that person be
20 starting?

21 MS. GOBER: They've already started for us part-
22 time. She's also employed full-time with another
23 district, and she is helping me with writing the IEPs
24 in the evenings -- not writing the IEPs -- helping me
25 to be prepared to do the next IEP, as we do, and

1 helping me as my mentor and helping me with the part
2 that I don't know about the special ed.

3 DR. PFEFFER: So going forward, what will the
4 leadership structure look like in the school as long
5 as this person does -- you know -- as long as things
6 stay the same and you have a fully licensed special
7 ed. teacher?

8 MS. GOBER: She has indicated to us that she
9 would like to stay with us at the end of the year and
10 we would like nothing better than for her to come to
11 work with us full-time. We foresee that we -- we are
12 -- special ed. students are drawn to us because of
13 the movement and choice, and so we foresee that that
14 will continue to grow. And I would like to continue
15 to be an integral part of that to make sure those
16 students don't continue -- from the time they walk in
17 the door we want to encompass them and make sure they
18 move forward.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So, but will you then
20 reassume duties as -- like as school principal,
21 director, or is that going to be shuffled around
22 again?

23 MS. GOBER: Well, I mean, if we find someone
24 that's better qualified, absolutely. I will go where
25 -- of those two hats, yes, wherever it's best

1 qualified for me -- not me, for the students -- but,
2 you know --

3 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So who ultimately will kind
4 of make the decision, I guess, and look at the
5 leadership and how is that structured?

6 MS. GOBER: The board will have to make that
7 final decision based on the resumes and --

8 DR. PFEFFER: And you do now have your full
9 seven-member board firmly in place?

10 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. Absolutely.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. All right. That's all I
12 have for right now.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

15 Just a question that came up and -- two
16 questions. Does Montessori -- is there a set of
17 standards that Montessori --

18 MS. GOBER: Yes, sir.

19 DR. GOTCHER: -- requires of you?

20 MS. GOBER: Yes, sir.

21 DR. GOTCHER: And tell us about that process. I
22 was trying to find it in the notes, and I did not, so
23 --

24 MS. GOBER: I'd like to pass that question to --

25 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

1 MS. GOBER: -- Shannon Nuckols, our curriculum
2 director. She breathes, eats, and lives Montessori,
3 and is almost Ms. Montessori herself.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I understand.

5 MS. GOBER: So let me get her.

6 MS. NUCKOLS: Hello. My name is Shannon
7 Nuckols.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Nuckols.

9 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes. So the Montessori curriculum
10 is a hundred year research-based method by Dr. Marie
11 Montessori. And we are -- actually, our teachers are
12 being trained and most have been -- gone through the
13 training with the Association Montessori
14 Internationale, which is the highest level of
15 Montessori training available; it's called the Golden
16 Apple of all training. And it needs to be noted too
17 that there is no -- anyone can call themselves a
18 Montessori school, so you have to look at the
19 training. So our teachers are doing the most
20 authentic training. Association Montessori
21 Internationale did align the curriculum with the
22 Common Core standards, so our teachers are able to
23 look at the Common Core standards and the Montessori
24 albums, which they have designed themselves, and make
25 those alignments. Also, we use Compass Learning,

1 which is an individualized computer program, which
2 also shows us where our students' strengths and
3 weaknesses are and we can take those and also align
4 it to our Montessori curriculum. We also do progress
5 monitoring with NWEA.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Good. I think, if I heard you
7 correctly, Montessori is not a copy-written -- in
8 other words, any school can call themselves that.

9 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes.

10 DR. GOTCHER: But in order to rise to the level
11 of that quality, that --

12 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes.

13 DR. GOTCHER: -- that Apple level that you said
14 --

15 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes.

16 DR. GOTCHER: -- that's a local decision. And
17 is there a rating? Is there a process of evaluating
18 that? Maybe you could expound upon that.

19 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir. So next year -- there
20 is a step to becoming a Montessori accredited school
21 and next year we are wanting to go through the
22 process of becoming fully accredited. And to be
23 Montessori accredited all the teachers have to be
24 fully Montessori trained; you have to have a full
25 compliment of AMI Montessori materials, which our

1 school has. A consultant from Association Montessori
2 Internationale comes to your school and does
3 evaluations of all the classrooms, the teachers, and
4 also talks to administrative staff, and also does
5 parent nights too with our staff. Then you will have
6 an accreditation team come from Association
7 Montessori Internationale to your school site and do
8 a full review.

9 DR. GOTCHER: So your goal is 100% of the
10 teachers to be trained in the -- did you call it the
11 Golden Apple?

12 MS. NUCKOLS: Yes.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

14 MS. NUCKOLS: And that will occur -- this summer
15 is our last summer of training.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. All right. Thank you. I
17 believe that's it for now. And may I have a follow-
18 up?

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Gober -- Stephen and Shannon
21 Nuckols, their relationship?

22 MS. GOBER: Husband and wife.

23 DR. GOTCHER: Husband and wife. And just as a
24 former superintendent and principal I'm just curious,
25 is there any issue in your policies or with the board

1 of having a supervisory relationship with Ms.
2 Nuckols?

3 MS. GOBER: Not in our policies, but we have
4 turned in the recommended paperwork for that to occur
5 at the State. Yes.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. So that -- is that a
7 permanent relationship or -- I think Ms. Pfeffer --
8 Dr. Pfeffer was asking some questions on that as
9 well, but not specific to that.

10 MS. GOBER: Right.

11 DR. GOTCHER: So that particular relationship
12 could exist --

13 MS. GOBER: Yes.

14 DR. GOTCHER: -- in the future?

15 MS. GOBER: Yes.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

17 MS. GOBER: Yes.

18 DR. GOTCHER: And the board is fully aware --

19 MS. GOBER: Yes.

20 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Thank you.

21 MS. GOBER: No problem.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Gober, come back and
23 clarify on the paperwork that's been turned in.

24 MS. GOBER: Because of the husband and wife in
25 our charter, we turned in that they were husband and

1 wife so that there would be --

2 DR. GOTCHER: Full disclosure.

3 MS. GOBER: -- full disclosure. I'm sorry; I
4 didn't word that correctly. I apologize.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis.

6 MS. DAVIS: I am looking, and it's not that
7 there's not one necessarily but I don't remember as
8 of recently there being a 1599 or 1381 request for
9 that. So they would still need to complete one of
10 those.

11 MR. ROGERS: I have a question. And it's just
12 based off something you said earlier --

13 MS. GOBER: Yes, sir.

14 MR. ROGERS: -- because I don't know, so I'll
15 have to ask. How does a full-time special ed.
16 teacher at another district work part-time at your
17 school?

18 MS. GOBER: Okay. She works during the day
19 there; she comes to ours in the afternoon, after her
20 school is over, and helps and mentors me on helping
21 -- just like the compensatory education that we need
22 to take care of between October and now. She shows
23 me how to do that and how to go about that so that I
24 can do and fulfill that.

25 MR. ROGERS: So she's not really being a special

1 ed. teacher at your school right now either; right?

2 MS. GOBER: Right.

3 MR. ROGERS: So she's just showing up in the
4 evenings, helping you with paperwork and showing you
5 how to --

6 MS. GOBER: Mentorship, yes.

7 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

8 MS. GOBER: She's not conducting lessons.
9 Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And is she being paid as a
11 --

12 MS. GOBER: Consultant.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- consultant?

14 MS. GOBER: I believe. Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

16 MS. HALEY: A couple of questions about that.
17 So that individual was I think the one who was
18 arranging conferences with parents to let them know
19 that services hadn't been provided. And do you know
20 off-hand how many conferences were held or the
21 majority or not too many or --

22 MS. GOBER: It's my understanding we have all
23 but four.

24 MS. HALEY: Okay. Okay. And can you just
25 explain maybe how the parents were invited to those

1 conferences?

2 MS. GOBER: We sent out a letter inviting them
3 to come, and let them know that she would be the one
4 that would be conducting the conference and that I
5 would be there and that I would be over the
6 educational aspect after that time.

7 MS. HALEY: Okay. So the letter that we have,
8 that we were provided saying --

9 MS. GOBER: I think we tweaked it, but yes,
10 ma'am.

11 MS. HALEY: Okay. And there is a letter that's
12 required, a notice of conference --

13 MS. GOBER: Right.

14 MS. HALEY: -- and we know you're new to special
15 ed. --

16 MS. GOBER: Right.

17 MS. HALEY: -- and we're working with you and
18 all that. But you have to list who the required
19 participants are. Do you know if that was provided
20 and the intent of the conference and all of that?

21 MS. GOBER: I know the letter was provided. I'm
22 not sure that I put all the people that needed to be
23 there.

24 MS. HALEY: Okay.

25 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

1 MS. HALEY: In terms of you've been providing
2 services for a while now --

3 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. HALEY: -- and we've reviewed those plans,
5 some of them are out-of-date.

6 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. HALEY: We're working on that.

8 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. HALEY: But in terms of your day and what
10 those services look like, it was -- I mean, some of
11 it said direct; some of it might've just said
12 reading. So can you just kind of give us -- you're
13 full-time; right?

14 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. HALEY: Okay. And I didn't see that you had
16 a prep period either, so I was concerned about that.

17 MS. GOBER: We have a waiver for our preps.

18 MS. HALEY: Okay.

19 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. HALEY: Okay. So anyway, for your day, just
21 off-hand, you have some pullout services, because
22 many of those kids have pullout resource classes?

23 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. HALEY: So if you can just kind of walk us
25 through it.

1 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. Luckily for me, I get
2 to start at 7:30. I have a couple of students who,
3 because of the situation that we are, are willing to
4 come at 7:30 and I do -- there's two -- three,
5 supposed to be; two usually show up -- and we do our
6 reading, our one-on-one -- three-to-one reading
7 during that time. Then I bring in another student at
8 8:00 and we do that. That separates -- and we are
9 working on the times, obviously. This is -- we're on
10 a journey. Then I get to start with another group;
11 we do that from 8:00 to 8:30. By that time in the
12 Montessori classes they have finished their morning
13 rug time; they know their plan of action for the day;
14 they know what lessons that they need to be working
15 in their journals for the week and what needs to be
16 done today. And at that time I go into the 4th, 5th
17 and 6th grade upper el. class, because we are multi-
18 grade, and I help them when they're doing their
19 lesson or whatever, like co-teaching.

20 MS. HALEY: Providing support?

21 MS. GOBER: Yes. And when that is over -- it's
22 a 45-minute block -- then I go to the other upper el.
23 class and do the same. And then -- I forget my day,
24 I'm sorry -- then I go back and do a block of reading
25 with other students. Then that's when I start my --

1 what we traditionally call the pullout time to see
2 each of the children, and I have math students and,
3 you know, all the things that you'd want. And it
4 goes through to -- on Mondays, because we're now
5 tutoring for all -- we go to 4:30; I have students
6 till 4:30 -- and then there's -- I work with them up
7 till 3:15 [sic], because my parents are very willing
8 to let me stay and work with them.

9 MS. HALEY: And so I know you know that IEPs
10 currently don't necessarily reflect --

11 MS. GOBER: Right.

12 MS. HALEY: -- what you're describing.

13 MS. GOBER: Right.

14 MS. HALEY: So you're meeting with parents and
15 discussing --

16 MS. GOBER: Right.

17 MS. HALEY: -- revisions --

18 MS. GOBER: Right.

19 MS. HALEY: -- if appropriate?

20 MS. GOBER: If appropriate, yes, to make sure
21 those objectives are being reached -- or if they've
22 been reached, do we have objectives that we need to
23 work on. Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. HALEY: Okay. Thank you.

25 MS. GOBER: On individuals.

1 MS. SMITH: So are there 10 students or are
2 there 21 students with IEPs? Because I've got both
3 numbers on this data sheet.

4 MS. GOBER: There's 21 current. There were 10
5 as of whatever -- the December 1st report.

6 MS. SMITH: So you have 21 students with IEPs
7 that you're currently serving?

8 MS. GOBER: Yes. Yes.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay. And, Greg, this may kind of
10 hit your area. So are there financial concerns right
11 now?

12 MR. ROGERS: (Nodding head up and down)

13 MS. SMITH: There are finance -- I need more
14 explanation of the finance concerns. Is it with
15 special ed. or --

16 MS. HALEY: I'm not going to say it's a
17 financial concern; it's a reporting concern that I
18 wanted to ask about.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. I need more information about
20 that. Because when I'm reading the information on
21 here I just have a piece of it and I don't have an
22 understanding. So I need someone to fill me in on
23 that.

24 MS. HALEY: Okay. And I don't know -- Ms. Gober
25 or Mr. Nuckols -- who's the appropriate person to ask

1 these questions or just pose this, but we have some
2 different numbers. So we have one set of students
3 that we were provided in February and there -- I
4 don't know -- 24, something -- some of those are
5 listed twice because they get related services and
6 special ed. services. So we're not exactly sure what
7 the total number is right now. We have another set
8 that you provided, I think, to one of our program
9 advisors about your schedule that we had requested.
10 And then we have the December 1 child count which was
11 submitted in Cycle 4, and then you had the
12 opportunity to review and make corrections in
13 January. And then we have some information submitted
14 to our finance office which was the same children but
15 I think there were questions about their home
16 residence because that's an issue with charter
17 schools and funding. And so it's -- I have this
18 spreadsheet that I worked on and one of them I call
19 Ms. Nuckols' List; one of them I call the December 1
20 Child Count; one of them I call Ms. Gober's Schedule;
21 and the other one I call the Finance List provided in
22 March. And I don't have Xs across the board in very
23 many of those. So, some of the kids that were listed
24 on the December 1 child count are not on your
25 schedule. A lot of the kids who are on both of the

1 lists that you provided and the list that we got in
2 February are not on the December 1 child count. And
3 so we did a little bit of checking and I think what
4 we found is that they have not been activated. And
5 so the data is definitely wrong and we need to get
6 that --

7 MS. GOBER: Yes.

8 MS. HALEY: -- corrected and -- but, first of
9 all, we need to make sure that we know exactly who
10 those kids were that were receiving services on
11 December 1. The other issue that we have in terms of
12 reporting is there are no special education course
13 codes that we could find.

14 MS. GOBER: Right.

15 MS. HALEY: And so they're all reported as
16 General Education courses, so that's another issue.
17 Because when that information goes through Standards
18 they don't know that there's a one-to-eight --

19 MS. GOBER: Right.

20 MS. HALEY: -- limit without a paraprofessional
21 if it's coded as a General Education class. So,
22 there are several concerns around reporting and data.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

24 DR. PFEFFER: So, and this may be a question for
25 Ms. Haley. So, and I'm -- with all of these issues

1 with special education that we've described are these
2 -- does this fall under special education in the
3 Standards for Accreditation? You know, are there
4 issues there? And so is this like the lack of
5 services that were -- the time period where there was
6 a lack of services and, you know, all of these
7 different things, I'm trying to figure out is that a
8 Standards of Accreditation violation? Because I
9 know, even though they do have a waiver from part of
10 the standards, that that is not something that could
11 be waived.

12 MS. HALEY: (Nodding head up and down.)

13 DR. PFEFFER: Is it just -- is it more of a
14 special education at the federal side? Kind of what
15 are we looking at here?

16 MS. HALEY: I don't know if it's a standards
17 violation or not, but we have made Standards aware of
18 that, that they didn't have a special education
19 teacher for several months. And in terms of -- we
20 have no idea in terms of the class limit because they
21 haven't been receiving services, for one thing, and
22 for another thing they haven't been recorded. So we
23 don't have a good idea right now of actually what's
24 going on in terms of numbers. I couldn't -- I can't
25 tell from all this.

1 MS. GOBER: Yeah. Okay.

2 MS. HALEY: And so we have some work to do with
3 you all. Yeah.

4 DR. PFEFFER: And I guess my question was there
5 because if it is a violation related to the Standards
6 of Accreditation I'm not sure if that would be
7 probationary status, I'm not sure if it would be a
8 citation, I'm not sure what that would be. And if
9 maybe someone from Standards could even, you know,
10 kind of walk us through what that might look like?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I see our team in the
12 back. Mr. Harvey, I'll need your entire team to
13 raise their right hand and let me swear you in. Do
14 you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about
15 to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and
16 nothing but the truth?

17 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Morris, you're
19 recognized.

20 MR. MORRIS: Willie Morris, Director of
21 Standards.

22 We had an OSR visit with the Montessori School
23 and they did have a few issues. But as relates to
24 Ms. Haley's question, it could be a probationary
25 issue if they did not hire someone. They will have a

1 period of time to get it corrected -- but if they
2 don't, it could turn into a probationary issue. But
3 that will be determined by the evidence that's
4 presented and then the State Board's vote on whether
5 they will approve probation and/or if they submit
6 enough evidence to warrant changing it.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What's the -- what was the
8 date of the OSR visit and what's the timeline for the
9 corrections?

10 MR. MORRIS: Well, the visit was on the 17th of
11 January and it's a 60-day period for them to correct
12 things; Friday, actually.

13 DR. PFEFFER: I'm sorry. So in terms of,
14 though, with standards, is it only -- is there only
15 an issue if there was a day teacher or is it also an
16 issue if it was more of the programmatic things where
17 services weren't provided, IEPs were not followed?
18 Is it -- does it even go beyond just whether or not a
19 teacher was there with an ALP?

20 MR. MORRIS: Well --

21 DR. PFEFFER: Because there will be multiple --

22 MR. MORRIS: -- some of that depends on the
23 conversation we would have with the special ed.
24 department, Ms. Haley. If she thinks that there's
25 going to be a probationary issue, she would talk to

1 the Standards Unit and then we will review it and
2 then make a determination as to whether we will
3 submit that to the Board.

4 MS. SMITH: Okay. On the timeline I'm looking
5 at here it shows that there was a SPED onsite
6 monitoring in November, November 17th. And so you're
7 saying that in January there was another site visit?

8 MR. MORRIS: That was a Standards OSR --

9 MS. SMITH: Standards OSR visit in January?

10 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

11 MS. SMITH: But the SPED site happened actually
12 in November?

13 MS. HALEY: (Nodding head up and down.)

14 MS. SMITH: Okay. And was just resolved with
15 the ALP recently; that's been approved?

16 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay.

18 MR. MORRIS: Now Special Ed. does their own
19 monitoring and then we do standards monitoring. And
20 if she warrants that it needs to be something
21 reviewed by us, then she will talk to us about it.

22 MS. SMITH: Okay. So for the special ed. people
23 -- and I don't know if that's somebody, Lisa, you can
24 answer, if you've got people in the audience -- was
25 the correction done within the time/manner set or is

1 that part of the problem? Is that why we're here
2 today is because it -- they did not respond in the
3 appropriate time?

4 MS. HALEY: (Nodding head up and down.)

5 MS. SMITH: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I don't think the record
7 can hear a head-shake.

8 MS. HALEY: Some of the items that were
9 requested have not been received, and they are
10 responding now -- I believe trying to respond. But
11 we did not get a lot of communication for awhile
12 after the first letter was sent and there seemed to
13 just be some confusion. There was no one to provide
14 special education or be that point person up until
15 very recently, when Ms. Gober has taken the position
16 as a special education teacher and is no longer the
17 principal. I mean, there are several kids here; this
18 is a full-time job. And so I believe that's why we
19 didn't receive responses. I can only guess that --
20 we did talk with Mr. Nuckols on site; we told him we
21 had called and sent letters. And there might've even
22 been some confusion on where the emails were going,
23 whether they were going to Ms. Nuckols instead of Mr.
24 Nuckols and those sorts of things, because the
25 superintendent position had changed as well and we

1 didn't know that.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Morris, do you have
3 any other issues that were uncovered during your OSR
4 visit?

5 MR. MORRIS: There were a couple of issues that
6 -- they have waivers for most of the things that we
7 checked. However, there are a few things that Mr.
8 Tomlinson and Mr. Causbie talked to them about on the
9 visit, one of them being that they didn't have a
10 taskforce on closing the achievement gap. And they
11 had some AIP issues in their policy handbook and they
12 didn't -- they were not maintaining AIPs; the
13 teachers were not maintaining the AIPs at that time
14 because they did not have one.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They didn't have --

16 MR. MORRIS: They did not have an AIP plan in
17 place.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anything else?

19 MR. MORRIS: Those were the only issues that was
20 reported to me.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Morris.

22 MR. MORRIS: Uh-huh.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Harvey, is there any
24 additional information from Public School
25 Accountability that this panel needs to hear?

1 MR. HARVEY: Not that I'm aware of at this time.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

3 MS. HALEY: Ms. Gober, I have one -- I have a
4 question. I won't say one more question; we'll see.
5 But the individual that y'all have hired that has
6 been consulting, it was our understanding not too
7 long ago that that person maybe would not continue
8 and maybe there had been some concern about her
9 attending conferences and that sort of thing. But
10 now that person you're thinking is going to be
11 employed and stay? And then I had a follow-up
12 question on something Ms. Pfeiffer -- or Dr. Pfeiffer
13 had asked about what your intent is in terms of
14 fulfilling your ALP?

15 MS. GOBER: The first -- I by no means know
16 every conversation that occurred. But my
17 understanding is that she had some concerns due to a
18 family member, and since that time that family member
19 has passed and so that has freed her up to go to work
20 for us full-time, as sad as it is to say. And I want
21 to deal with special children. I will truly -- I
22 mean, I will fulfill my ALP to help those children,
23 if that's -- given that chance. Yes.

24 MS. HALEY: But right now you are a full-time
25 special education teacher?

1 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. HALEY: Okay. Thank you.

3 MS. GOBER: Absolutely.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

5 DR. PFEFFER: Ms. Gober -- I'm sorry.

6 MS. GOBER: No.

7 DR. PFEFFER: I'm trying to catch you here. Can
8 you describe what your plan of study will entail, how
9 many hours you'll have to take?

10 MS. GOBER: I will have five classes. I'm
11 currently working with ASU because they had those
12 five classes very available online that I can do at
13 night while I'm still working at school during the
14 day.

15 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And it will also require an
16 assessment?

17 MS. GOBER: Yes.

18 DR. PFEFFER: And --

19 MS. GOBER: Yes, yes.

20 DR. PFEFFER: -- based on a new law of K-12
21 reading assessments?

22 MS. GOBER: Yes.

23 DR. PFEFFER: So, and I say all that for your
24 board to hear --

25 MS. GOBER: Right.

1 DR. PFEFFER: -- because they need to understand
2 --

3 MS. GOBER: This is not a given. Right.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Well, and they need to understand
5 when you're adding an additional area of licensure it
6 is -- it's a lot of work on top of your regular day-
7 job and there's a lot of responsibility there and
8 five classes, you know, and being able to take those
9 in the time needed. I just wanted to be sure they
10 were hearing that information because I don't know
11 that people always understand that.

12 MS. GOBER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

14 MR. LESTER: Yes. Taking a look at your Title 1
15 status at this point, our Targeted Assisted, and I
16 was just looking at what y'all use that Targeted
17 Assisted money for was a Title 1 paraprofessional.
18 In Targeted Assisted that position is limited to
19 those targeted kids. Your percentage of over 70%
20 would allow you to apply for school-wide. So I would
21 encourage you, to be able to have more flexibility
22 with that parapro that you use in your building, to
23 call our para program of the Title 1 office and get
24 that paperwork started, because I think it will be a
25 big help in utilizing your staff better.

1 MS. GOBER: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

3 MR. ROGERS: Who does the finances for the
4 school right now?

5 MS. GOBER: Complete Consultant works with us
6 and Mr. Nuckols.

7 MR. ROGERS: Excuse me; what was that last name
8 again?

9 MS. GOBER: Mr. Nuckols.

10 MR. ROGERS: Who is also --

11 MS. GOBER: Superintendent.

12 MR. ROGERS: -- superintendent, and married to
13 the -- I mean, that's kind of where I'm --

14 MS. GOBER: He wears many hats. We all do.

15 MR. ROGERS: You kind of went where -- I was
16 wondering what -- trying to figure out, because
17 earlier when Ivy asked you what the organization was
18 now you're stepping outside by having a consultant
19 who's actually a part of it because he's married to
20 the superintendent. When's the last time y'all had
21 an audit?

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Married to the curriculum
23 --

24 MR. ROGERS: Curriculum director, or whatever
25 she is this week. When's the last time you had an

1 audit?

2 MR. NUCKOLS: Sir, we're -- Stephen Nuckols,
3 superintendent for Rockbridge. Sir, we're currently
4 under -- we're currently working with Legislative
5 Audit, and still in progress, in fact making
6 compliance with their request for documentation
7 concerning financial status of Rockbridge, and
8 working closely with two members of the audit team,
9 and continuing until those questions have been
10 satisfied.

11 MR. ROGERS: Can I keep going?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

13 MR. ROGERS: So this will be the first audit
14 y'all have had?

15 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, sir.

16 MR. ROGERS: And they're there right now
17 working, looking for information?

18 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, sir.

19 MR. ROGERS: What are your bid procedures?

20 MR. NUCKOLS: Pardon me, sir?

21 MR. ROGERS: Your bid procedures for contracts?

22 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, we do have contracts with
23 various vendors. I do realize that early on with the
24 initial construction projects at Rockbridge there may
25 have been some issues that have come up in regards to

1 bidding on the construction projects. We're still
2 trying to submit that documentation that's required
3 by Legislative Audit to say whether or not we went
4 through the bidding process appropriately.

5 MR. ROGERS: So you're still trying to determine
6 on contracts you already have out if you went through
7 the bid process correctly?

8 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes, sir.

9 MR. ROGERS: Are you -- what are your bid
10 procedures? Are you going through bids now?

11 MR. NUCKOLS: No, sir. Nothing currently.

12 MR. ROGERS: So I think you have a cleaning
13 service contract also --

14 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct.

15 MR. ROGERS: -- for around \$6,000 per month?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes, sir.

17 MR. ROGERS: Was that bid out?

18 MR. NUCKOLS: With Razorback Cleaning.

19 MR. ROGERS: So it was bid out originally?

20 MR. NUCKOLS: (Nodding head up and down.)

21 MR. ROGERS: And that won't be reflected in the
22 audit that you didn't bid it out originally?

23 MR. NUCKOLS: I've not had any questions in
24 regard to the Razorback Cleaning contract. That has
25 not come to the surface. No, sir.

1 MR. ROGERS: So also in the -- Razorback was
2 about \$6,000 a month; you're still paying for
3 cleaning supplies and other stuff for --

4 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir, in addition. Yes, sir.
5 I'm sorry.

6 MR. ROGERS: No, that's all -- that's what I'm
7 trying to figure out is why are you --

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

9 MR. ROGERS: -- paying for cleaning supplies if
10 you're paying \$6,000 a month?

11 MR. NUCKOLS: In addition to major repairs, such
12 as our air conditioning unit and heating unit that's
13 gone out, they make on-site corrections as part of
14 that contract.

15 MR. ROGERS: The cleaning service does?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes, sir.

17 MR. ROGERS: Wow, that's a good cleaning
18 service.

19 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

20 MR. ROGERS: I guess over \$6,000 a month though
21 -- the facilities money that you got for facilities
22 funding, building, the \$38,000, what did you use that
23 for?

24 MR. NUCKOLS: Specifically, I would -- I may
25 have to defer that question to our accountants that

1 we work closely with.

2 MR. ROGERS: Who's your accountants?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: They would be our accountants.
4 Mr. Hamilton from Complete Consulting may have a
5 detailed answer that would better address the
6 question.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You'll need to state your
8 name and title. And were you sworn in?

9 MR. HAMILTON: I was.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. HAMILTON: Darren Hamilton, Complete
12 Consulting.

13 Generally, most of that is going toward rent,
14 just general occupancy expenses.

15 MR. ROGERS: All \$38,000 is being used for rent?

16 MR. HAMILTON: Well, rent, occupancy expenses,
17 repairs, you know, general maintenance.

18 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Well, I mean, when you say
19 that -- but I'm looking at the general ledger
20 expenditures and I'm seeing, you know, water,
21 custodial, just all sorts of normal through there,
22 regular operating. But then you're telling me that
23 you're also using facilities money for it too. So,
24 honestly, when I was looking through this it was a
25 crazy budget and it doesn't look like it's making any

1 sense. And if you weren't getting the \$55,000 that
2 was released recently, I don't see how you'd make it
3 through the end of the year. And that's -- that is
4 my concerns. And I can't -- and when I was looking
5 at this, based off what I had it looks like right now
6 you'd probably end around \$40,000. But I understand
7 you just got \$50,000, so I'd have to go back and look
8 at it, but --

9 MR. HAMILTON: Yes. We're projected to end at
10 about \$92,000.

11 MR. ROGERS: You're going to project right now
12 to end at \$92,000 at the end of this year?

13 MR. HAMILTON: Yes, sir.

14 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

15 MR. HAMILTON: And we have a schedule, and we
16 actually worked with APSRC, so we feel comfortable
17 with that number. If you'd like to see it, like for
18 me to share that with you, I definitely can.

19 MR. ROGERS: Yes, I would.

20 MR. HAMILTON: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A follow-up: how long have
22 you been members of APSRC?

23 MR. HAMILTON: I am not a member of APSRC. I'm
24 a member of Complete Consulting, and I've been with
25 Complete Consulting right at about a month. However,

1 let me say this, I am not new to public finance; I am
2 not new to accounting. I'm a CPA; I've been a CPA
3 since 2003. I have extensive audit background, and
4 so it's not that -- I've been with Complete
5 Consulting for one month, but we've been in the
6 business for a while.

7 MR. ROGERS: And they have a contract with you
8 for that?

9 MR. HAMILTON: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And how long has that
11 contract been in place?

12 MR. HAMILTON: Since the charter started.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Mr. Nuckols --

14 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- how long has the school
16 district been a member of APSRC?

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Since its conception. Yes, ma'am.

18 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Nuckols, have you gone through
19 Tier 1 training?

20 MR. NUCKOLS: No, sir, I have not.

21 MR. ROGERS: That's kind of a big deal. It's
22 pretty serious for having a finance person who hasn't
23 had Tier 1 training. That's fiscal distress right
24 there. And we've never put anybody on fiscal
25 distress in a charter school before.

1 MR. NUCKOLS: If I may clarify, as a member of
2 the U.S. Army Reserve I have been deployed the 2015-
3 2016 school year. And having returned from
4 deployment I came on staff with Rockbridge in order
5 to be a part of what we're doing, something unique,
6 something that's special in my heart to do. As an
7 educator of almost 20 years, I know that it's
8 something unique that we do not have, that other
9 children don't have access to. And so I feel special
10 in that regard to be able to contribute. Now,
11 granted, I have much to learn in the process and
12 there's still much training that I can certainly
13 benefit from. I'm much -- I'm willing to pursue any
14 of that that's necessary in order to meet the
15 requirements.

16 MR. ROGERS: And I wasn't -- when you were
17 deployed were you a staff member at that time?

18 MR. NUCKOLS: No, sir.

19 MR. ROGERS: Were you the finance person when
20 you were deployed?

21 MR. NUCKOLS: No, sir. Again, I came on-board
22 at Rockbridge in June of 2016, after the deployment.
23 Yes, sir.

24 MR. ROGERS: So was the previous finance person
25 before you --

1 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir. He was -- yes, sir,
2 that's correct. Mr. Chris Givens was part of
3 Rockbridge staff who managed the day-to-day finance,
4 billing, in addition to eSchool data input and child
5 nutrition.

6 MR. ROGERS: That's all I have.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Was the previous
8 superintendent trained in Tier 1?

9 MR. NUCKOLS: That would be Mrs. Gober, and I do
10 not recall if she's had that training.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mrs. Gober?

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. GOBER: I have not. I think you're
14 referring to the first year superintendent?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

16 MS. GOBER: Mr. Stevens. And he had been
17 through Tier 1 training.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So during what timeline
19 was Mrs. Nuckols the superintendent?

20 MS. GOBER: When Mr. Stevens left in October of
21 2015.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Mrs. Nuckols, will
23 you come to the microphone? Did you receive Tier 1
24 training?

25 MS. NUCKOLS: I began the beginning

1 administrators training with the Department of
2 Education.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You completed that
4 program?

5 MS. NUCKOLS: I did the first year.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Mr. Nuckols, were you
7 -- have you been -- have you participated in new
8 administrators training?

9 MR. NUCKOLS: No, ma'am, I have not.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I think -- I know for
11 beginning superintendent training and beginning
12 administrator it's possible that it could've been
13 Tier 1 training, but those records are with AAEA or
14 with us; I'm not sure. Greg, maybe you can
15 articulate that. Okay.

16 MR. NUCKOLS: If it helps the members of the
17 Panel at all I do have a timeline for your review
18 regarding the leadership, if that's something that
19 you'd like to view.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

21 (WHEREUPON, A3 Exhibit One (1) was marked for
22 identification and entered into the record.)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Gober, I have a
24 follow-up question regarding the special ed. teacher
25 that is assisting you at night.

1 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: How many years of license
3 does she have in the State of Arkansas?

4 MS. GOBER: I believe 26 years.

5 MR. NUCKOLS: There is one correction I'd like
6 to point out. You've probably already seen it. The
7 first two dates, an oversight on my part, should've
8 been 2015, October 2015. And the rest are correct.

9 DR. PFEFFER: So both are October 2015?

10 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

11 That's an oversight on my part.

12 MS. HALEY: Ms. Coffman, can I ask Mr. Nuckols a
13 question?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Absolutely.

15 MS. HALEY: Mr. Nuckols --

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. HALEY: -- either you or Ms. Gober -- are
18 you aware of any parents that had concerns when you
19 alerted them that their students have not received
20 special education services?

21 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. In fact, we did have
22 a call from your department indicating that there was
23 a parent concern. Mrs. Hughes informed me about the
24 parent and I immediately gave her a phone call to
25 address the concerns. Her child was in speech. He

1 was not eligible for reading or math and those
2 academic areas of concern. However, she did have
3 questions about that and welcomed her to come in and
4 chat with us to see what we could do about addressing
5 that. And if she had additional concerns we'd look
6 at testing. Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. HALEY: And the conferences that were held
8 with the consultant that you have hired, we did have
9 concerns about the memo that was put out that the
10 conference would be 20 minutes and back-to-back and
11 that kind of thing, because this is a really big deal
12 to talk to parents about -- not only that, about
13 compensatory education that their children might now
14 be eligible for and what services are going to look
15 like moving forward. Can you talk about that at all?
16 How did that actually run that weekend or those
17 evenings?

18 MS. GOBER: I too was concerned. And when I let
19 her know -- I'm not sure she understood the full
20 grasp of the lack of services between October and
21 whatever, and I don't think she fully grasped that
22 our parents -- the concern that they might have. So
23 I asked her to not schedule them in that manner and
24 to allow us to have 40 minutes. And even then, the
25 parents that were later in the day we told them that

1 was a targeted time, but could we call them if the
2 conference in front of them was running long, would
3 they please allow us to call them and let them know
4 that. Because we understand that parents could have
5 concern that their child had not been serviced.

6 MS. HALEY: Right. Did you have general ed.
7 teachers present at those conferences?

8 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. HALEY: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. GOBER: You betcha.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Nuckols, did you
12 receive training for eFinance?

13 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. Pardon me.
14 Correction: not for eFinance. Most of the training I
15 have had has been on the student data entry side,
16 working with APSCN in order to insure that the data
17 is done correctly. However, I do know, according to
18 Ms. Haley and her concerns with special ed., there
19 are still some corrections that need to be made
20 concerning our special ed. children and getting that
21 data corrected so that the -- well, the primary
22 example would be the 1 December special ed. count,
23 which is still not correct. And so I'm working with
24 APSCN to make those corrections. Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So as superintendent --

1 well, the timeline is very helpful. Very helpful.
2 So this question is kind of a joint question for you
3 and Mrs. Gober. At the point you realized you've got
4 issues, when was that and then what were your next
5 immediate steps?

6 MS. GOBER: Early on. Quite frankly, the first
7 day of school when we didn't have students show up.
8 I mean, that puts the -- I mean, that's in the back
9 of your mind at all times. That, of course, started
10 the ball rolling and what can be done. And with Mr.
11 Givens leaving and Mr. Nuckols taking care of some of
12 those issues with eSchool and all, that's when we
13 decided and talked to the board about him being
14 placed in that particular role, since he -- the
15 students had not shown up; he was a teacher that we
16 could take out of the classroom with the least amount
17 of problem for the students. And then when Ms.
18 Cochran resigned that became another issue, the
19 special ed. teacher. And as we began looking for
20 that, we were in the middle -- that was when the
21 special ed. came for our -- to look at things and
22 monitor us and that opened that door. And as we
23 began to work with that and then other things it just
24 -- that's when it proceeded. Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So what were your first --

1 so you talked about what you did; you talked to your
2 board, then who did you reach out to? Did you reach
3 out to ADE, did you reach out to APSRC? What was the
4 timeline of that conversation?

5 MS. GOBER: During the monitoring system and
6 shortly thereafter we reached out to ADE with special
7 ed. and did not -- I mean, I'll take full
8 responsibility; we did not follow-up as well as we
9 could. Again, I'll take full blame. You keep
10 thinking, well, you interview someone thinking that's
11 going to be the person that we're going to do and we
12 can move on, and it doesn't, and then you're three or
13 four days into it and it just keeps mounting on you,
14 as well as the other issues. We reached out to APSRC
15 for help and they've been very beneficial to help us
16 to try to get back on track. And like I said at the
17 very beginning, we realize that we -- these are some
18 major issues. We are much stronger on the
19 educational side than we are on the finance and the
20 eSchool and reporting side. But for children's sake,
21 I would hope that would be the side that we would be
22 heavy on and get the help that we need to get the
23 others in line. And whether that be with further
24 monitoring by -- with APSRC and the State Board and
25 the Department of Ed., and then get the right people

1 -- if we don't have the right people on the bus, get
2 them on the bus and get them in the right seat and
3 let's move forward for children. Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

5 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. I think this question would
6 be for one or both board members, if -- and I'm
7 sorry, I didn't write down names.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Gober, were there any
9 other board members here?

10 MS. GOBER: No, ma'am. I'm so sorry. Mr. Ciak
11 and Mr. Albert.

12 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. Mr. Ciak and Mr. Albert.
13 And I realize you all are new to this, but I just
14 want to -- I mean, this is just kind of a blunt
15 question. But who's in charge of the school? Who's
16 leading the school?

17 MR. ALBERT: From the time I started interacting
18 with the school, which I said was on conception, Mrs.
19 Nuckols has been the one that I turn to to give most
20 of the answers to any kind of questions I have. And
21 that's the person I interacted with mostly. I know
22 others came on later, but she was the primary person
23 that I had interacted with.

24 DR. PFEFFER: You said Mrs. Nuckols?

25 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

1 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

2 MR. CIAK: I would say in my experience I've
3 seen both of the Nuckols and Ms. Gober in leadership
4 positions. I'm really not qualified to say beyond
5 the title of superintendent. I mean, I would think
6 Mr. Nuckols is the superintendent. But what I see is
7 a group of people that are banding together to do
8 whatever it's going to take to serve the children.

9 DR. PFEFFER: But in your position as a board
10 member and hearing the conversation today and
11 realizing that -- I mean, and from their own
12 testimonies the number of things, do you have
13 concerns about leadership right now and some of the
14 necessary things that are going to have to be put in
15 place or -- from the governing side of it, with your
16 -- you know -- that's a heavy duty.

17 MR. CIAK: It is. And, obviously, I can't say
18 that I wouldn't have concerns after listening to
19 what's here today. But I have a career that's built
20 upon solving problems and, you know, I just don't --
21 I don't see this as insurmountable with resources and
22 a commitment to get it done. Yes, it will take a
23 plan; yes, it will require follow-up; yes, it will
24 require governance. But that's all what we sign up
25 for as we become board members.

1 DR. PFEFFER: And it is. But some of these
2 issues that were brought out today, especially with
3 regards to special education, there are state and
4 federal issues and there are student rights, and, you
5 know, from the finance things. And, you know, you
6 all have mentioned three different people right now
7 in terms of who's leading the school, and the one who
8 actually has the assignment or title is not -- does
9 not have required training in the financial area.
10 And so I just wanted to have that brief conversation
11 with you. Thank you.

12 MR. ALBERT: I do want to come in on answering
13 your question. And you asked about concerns. Yes, I
14 do have some concerns from what I've heard here
15 today. But as my other member pointed out, they are
16 not insurmountable. I know from my experience, while
17 working, I have sat on numerous boards and I've been
18 chairman of numerous boards in other professions, as
19 well as in some related to schools. And finance,
20 that is one of the major areas. I think with proper
21 consulting and individuals there to guide that can be
22 handled. Now some of the other governance --
23 governing issues, a lot of this is just simply
24 sitting down and we as board members and new board
25 members can sit down and monitor, as well as question

1 some of the things that I'm hearing here today. I
2 definitely have gotten some insight into some areas
3 in which we can as a board make sure we monitor and
4 make sure those things are cured.

5 DR. PFEFFER: And just to follow-up, would part
6 of that be a close investigation into the leadership
7 and making a determination so maybe that there --

8 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

9 DR. PFEFFER: -- is stability?

10 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

11 DR. PFEFFER: And clear --

12 MR. ALBERT: Definitely, to make sure that there
13 is stability in leadership, as well as a clear mind
14 of organizational structure; you know, make sure the
15 alignments are proper and individuals who are -- that
16 need to be in positions are in the right positions
17 and everything should be able to operate the way it's
18 designed.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

20 MS. SMITH: Mr. Virginia Perry from the Charter
21 Unit -- Ms. Virginia Perry --

22 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. SMITH: I know that you've been working with
24 this school in the time period that you've been here
25 at the Department. Have you found the school to be

1 responsive to your requests? When needing paperwork
2 or responding to issues, have they been responsive in
3 a timely manner?

4 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: They have been responsive,
5 but it might take going to the school from time to
6 time to get a response. But they've been responsive
7 overall.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

9 Ms. Gober, you made the comment that your first
10 sign of concern was the students not showing up. So
11 did y'all have a decline of student enrollment this
12 year?

13 MS. GOBER: We had 181 students who had enrolled
14 and filled out enrollment packets for the first day,
15 and then the first day 134 actually came to the door.

16 MS. SMITH: Okay. So 134. How many students do
17 you have actually enrolled right now?

18 MS. GOBER: 151.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. Okay. And then I know that
20 you guys work with APSRC.

21 MS. GOBER: Uh-huh. Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. SMITH: Who have y'all worked with in the
23 last month? I mean, how often have you worked with
24 APSRC on a regular basis?

25 MS. GOBER: Daily.

1 MS. SMITH: Daily, since when?

2 MS. GOBER: Over the last -- probably since --
3 we contacted them first in October. We keep
4 communication open. But over the last two months
5 probably daily --

6 MS. SMITH: Okay.

7 MS. GOBER: -- someone -- someone with our staff
8 with someone with their staff.

9 MS. SMITH: Can I ask -- speak to someone from
10 APSRC who would like to -- who's been working with
11 them?

12 MR. WHITE: Mark White, Director of Legal
13 Services for APSRC. And I'll just tell you we've had
14 numerous staff members working with the school, so
15 depending on the questions I may need to pull someone
16 else up to help with that.

17 MS. SMITH: That's what I wanted to hear from
18 you was, have you on a regular basis been working
19 with the school and have you found the school to be
20 responsive to the requests and needs?

21 MR. WHITE: We have been working intensively
22 with them over the last couple of months, trying to
23 clear up some of these log-jams, making sure there's
24 communication going on with the school and special
25 ed. unit, making sure the finance issues have been

1 addressed, helping them make sure they respond to
2 Legislative Audit appropriately and timely. So we
3 are continuing to work with that and will do so for
4 the foreseeable future.

5 MS. SMITH: Prior to the last couple of months
6 -- they've been members since they were authorized in
7 2014 -- have they not utilized your -- what you guys
8 offer on a regular basis up to this point?

9 MR. WHITE: I know there has been some work in
10 the school last fall, and I was not involved with
11 that so I can't give you any details. But I know
12 there was some work last fall.

13 MS. SMITH: Okay. But not on a regular basis?

14 MR. WHITE: Let me check. I don't --

15 MS. SMITH: I mean, I'm delighted to hear that
16 we've been working on a regular basis the last couple
17 of months.

18 MR. WHITE: Right.

19 MS. SMITH: I'm delighted to hear that. I'm
20 just saying up to that point had that not been the
21 case?

22 MR. WHITE: If it is, I'm not aware of it.

23 MS. SMITH: Not aware?

24 MR. WHITE: I'm just looking -- no, I don't
25 believe so.

1 MS. SMITH: Okay. All right. Thank you.

2 MR. WHITE: Thanks.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

4 DR. GOTCHER: And I'll rest upon someone from
5 Charter or Legal. Do they currently have a waiver of
6 licensure for administrator?

7 MS. MARY PERRY: Mary Perry. Will you please
8 give us a moment to check that?

9 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, please.

10 MS. MARY PERRY: They have a waiver of Qualified
11 Teacher in Every Room, 6-15-1004. You asked
12 specifically about leadership?

13 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, ma'am.

14 MS. MARY PERRY: They have a waiver concerning
15 the principal's responsibility, 6-17-302. And then
16 all the others go with the classroom teacher. I
17 don't see a waiver here pertaining to
18 superintendents.

19 Oh, okay. Jennifer says that she's got it on
20 the big chart, so that would be more accurate. There
21 may have been something that happened in the meeting.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Understood.

23 MS. DAVIS: I know that -- hang on, I'm checking
24 the other one. They do have a -- it does look like
25 they have -- yes, they do have a waiver of the

1 superintendent licensing requirement.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, while you're
3 there, do they have a copy of their charter? Has a
4 copy of their charter been provided to them?

5 MS. DAVIS: I don't know if there has been or
6 not. I don't -- I don't know. I don't -- I have not
7 done one for them, but that doesn't mean that there
8 was not one done prior to me. So, we're checking.

9 DR. GOTCHER: And I have a follow-up whenever --

10 MS. DAVIS: Okay. So they started in the 14-15
11 school year, so I don't know if they had, since I've
12 only been with the Department for two years. But we
13 can check and see if there is one.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MS. DAVIS: I mean, they may know if they have a
16 copy of their charter. But I will check and see if
17 we or the Charter Office has a copy.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Davis --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis.

21 DR. GOTCHER: So does an administrator/
22 superintendent need a license in any area to serve in
23 that position based upon the waivers that have been
24 granted by this Panel and approved by the Board of
25 Education?

1 MS. DAVIS: No. They don't have to have the
2 superintendent/administrator license. But like all
3 the other requirements in regards to, you know,
4 training and things like that, I believe that they
5 still have to, you know, do that necessary training,
6 Tier 1.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Like the Tier 1, et cetera. Okay.
8 Because --

9 MS. DAVIS: We do have a signed page that
10 they've received their contract or that they've
11 signed it -- we have signed it. Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The charter.

13 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

15 MR. ROGERS: I just have two questions for the
16 charter. How much are you -- is your rent for your
17 facility right now, is one.

18 MS. GOBER: \$13,000 a month.

19 MR. NUCKOLS: \$13,200.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what's included in the
21 rent? Just the location?

22 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. Just the building.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No utilities or --

24 MR. NUCKOLS: No, ma'am. That's all separate.
25 Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: What about upkeep,
2 repairs?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: We are responsible for internal
4 repairs. The external repairs, St. John church
5 appropriates those. And we've had -- we have had
6 some repair work done.

7 MR. ROGERS: I'm sorry; my other question was
8 probably beating a dead horse, but it was on the
9 cycle -- the December 1st cycle counts. So is it 10
10 kids or is it 21 kids? And the name that I heard
11 earlier that he indicated was getting services was
12 not on the list that y'all turned in to my finance
13 unit today. So that still kind of concerns me that
14 -- what Lisa was talking about -- when Ms. Haley was
15 talking about we're still chasing kids. Because your
16 board member who just said his child is receiving
17 services -- I'm not the greatest speller in the
18 world, but I'm pretty sure I don't see that kid's
19 name on this list that was given to us today. So --

20 MS. GOBER: I have 21 folders --

21 MR. ROGERS: And so --

22 MS. GOBER: -- in my locked box.

23 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

24 MS. HALEY: So we will sort this out with you
25 this week because we have to finalize our counts.

1 But we don't know the number either, Mr. Rogers,
2 because we have three or four different lists going.

3 MR. ROGERS: The parent -- I don't want you to
4 say her name -- I don't want you to say her name
5 again.

6 MR. CIAK: I wasn't going to. No, I just wanted
7 to clarify; I did not say my daughter was currently
8 receiving services.

9 MR. ROGERS: Oh, okay.

10 MR. CIAK: I said she had received them in the
11 past.

12 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Okay. That may be why.
13 Okay. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley, do you have
15 more?

16 MS. HALEY: I don't necessarily -- I don't have
17 another question. But we discussed this with you,
18 Ms. Gober, and Mr. Nuckols, and you're both very well
19 aware of, you know, IDEA is an individual entitlement
20 --

21 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. HALEY: -- and it's a very serious issue.
23 And we understand the Montessori model is a good
24 thing for kids and y'all are doing good things. But
25 there's a federal law --

1 MS. GOBER: Uh-huh.

2 MS. HALEY: -- that we have to follow and you
3 have to follow, and you're responsible for the
4 services provided until such time as those documents
5 are changed, which they have not, and ultimately
6 we're responsible.

7 MS. GOBER: Absolutely.

8 MS. HALEY: So it's a very serious issue. And
9 not only that, they have rights in terms of
10 discipline and just a plethora of other things, and
11 so do their parents.

12 MS. GOBER: Exactly.

13 MS. HALEY: So we really need to work together
14 about professional development and training so --
15 because that's -- I'm concerned, again, about the
16 system and your ability. I think you mean well --

17 MS. GOBER: Uh-huh.

18 MS. HALEY: -- and I know you're doing a good
19 job, Ms. Gober, with the kids, but you're going to
20 need a lot of support and we realize that.

21 MS. GOBER: I agree with that.

22 MS. HALEY: Yeah.

23 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

25 So, Ms. Gober, I have a little table written up

1 here on my page. And so those issues that you
2 outlined in your presentation -- special ed. is one
3 of the issues; I've written you down as the
4 responsible person to get those issues resolved.

5 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Finance, who is the
7 responsible person for getting all of the financial
8 information resolved?

9 MS. GOBER: Mr. Nuckols will be.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Who's going to be
11 responsible for giving us accurate data?

12 MS. GOBER: Mr. Nuckols will be.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And my last
14 question is for the board members. Sorry; this is
15 not exercise class but you can probably count some of
16 it.

17 MR. ALBERT: I need it.

18 MR. CIAK: I've got to make sure my Fitbit is
19 working.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You're getting your steps
21 in today. As new board members do either of you, or
22 both of you, have a copy of the charter --

23 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- or the contract for the
25 charter?

1 MR. ALBERT: Yes.

2 MR. CIAK: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And you've read that?

4 MR. CIAK: No.

5 MR. ALBERT: No.

6 MR. CIAK: My first meeting was February 28th.

7 MR. ALBERT: Same here. I've been working on
8 that video, you know, of the training. That's where
9 I spend most of my time trying to get up-to-date with
10 it.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So we take it very
12 seriously. I mean, the information that we're
13 getting is that students are -- that there's
14 education going on and that it's great education.
15 You yourself have testified to that. But the issues
16 are very clearly identified.

17 So, Board, before we take any action I want to
18 make sure if we have any more questions and then I
19 have a couple more people for public comment. Any
20 questions?

21 DR. GOTCHER: I just need to hear from Legal on
22 the board's options -- the Panel's options.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let's get that last two --

24 DR. GOTCHER: Exactly. Exactly.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Gentlemen.

1 I have a Neal Denman. A Neal Denman?

2 MR. DENMON: Yes, ma'am. We're with Complete
3 Consulting. We signed the wrong form coming in.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No problem. And a Darien
5 [sic] Hamilton?

6 MR. DENMON: Darren, same thing.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Davis, may
8 we take a quick break and come back and --

9 MS. DAVIS: Of course.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right.

11 MS. DAVIS: You can do whatever you'd like, I
12 mean, within reason -- within reason.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Five minutes.

14 (BREAK: 4:43 - 4:49 P.M.)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let's resume. Any
16 additional questions? Are you ready for discussion?
17 Ms. Smith.

18 MS. SMITH: So this is -- we're just open to
19 discussion, so we can talk amongst ourselves; right?

20 MS. DAVIS: Right.

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. So just kind of where I'm
22 falling with this: I don't doubt the curriculum side
23 or the intent, but I do find evidence of neglect on
24 the management side. And I guess this is kind of
25 where the role of waivers comes in. I recognize that

1 we have waivers for certain things, but having a
2 waiver does not excuse a school from the lack of
3 knowledge about special ed. or the lack of knowledge
4 about finances or the lack of knowledge about how to
5 license, the lack of -- I mean, so you might have a
6 waiver -- whereas you have a waiver for the
7 superintendent license, but that doesn't mean that
8 that person doesn't need to have the knowledge about
9 the finances. So I just kind of feel -- I just have
10 the thought that there's been some neglect in those
11 areas that need to be addressed immediately. I would
12 like for us to discuss possibly a probationary status
13 with an action plan that is outlined -- that the
14 Charter Unit works with this school, that outlines
15 the specific areas of data, finance, special ed., and
16 this board. And that there are specific actions
17 outlined within that action plan in that probationary
18 status. At that point the school can work with
19 APSRC, work with members of the Department to meet
20 those goals that are established within that
21 probationary plan, and then come back to us for
22 review in possibly three to six months. That's
23 something that I would like us to consider maybe
24 thinking about doing. And then in three to six
25 months, whatever timeline we've set, if it's not

1 cleaned up -- because when we have 151 students we
2 should be able to know how many IEP folders we have.
3 I was a principal of a school of over 600 and I knew;
4 we knew our numbers. So 151 students is not a number
5 that makes me go, "Oh, it's just a really big school"
6 or "it's just a" -- we should know. Okay. We should
7 know our numbers. So I would like us to maybe -- the
8 thought of probationary status to get the management
9 side cleaned up, because that's where I feel like we
10 have fallen short here.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

12 DR. PFEFFER: And I remember when we approved
13 this charter and one of the things that I really
14 liked was the fact that, you know, till that time,
15 you know, Montessori was found in private schools,
16 and it was an opportunity for kids in Little Rock
17 that otherwise wouldn't have that choice to be able
18 to choose the Montessori. So I appreciate Ms.
19 Smith's comments and a probationary time period with
20 a clear plan could be a good thing. I think what I
21 would really, really, really advocate is that
22 leadership has got to be -- it's got to be defined,
23 and the organization within the management, because
24 otherwise we will continue to see these problems over
25 and over again, you know, realizing that there may

1 still be issues that come out with Standards for
2 Accreditation because of the special education
3 issues. So, you know, I think -- I do think that the
4 educational benefits -- because this is something
5 that is a choice for students in Little Rock that
6 they may not otherwise have. But I don't think we
7 can be very patient for very long on the management
8 issues.

9 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I'm not sure that
10 probation is where I am at this point. When I
11 realize that two of the three leaders had ample
12 opportunity to get Tier 1 training, and the law does
13 provide that fiscal distress can be a reason for lack
14 of Tier 1 training, I'm not convinced that our
15 special ed. team is convinced that the special ed.
16 issues are on a fast-track for correction. Our
17 office has not received a 1599 disclosure statement.
18 There was an email back on December 21, 2016 that
19 expressed concern from our Charter Office of the
20 relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Nuckols, and as of
21 March 15th there is no 1599 in our possession. So
22 from my chair I'm not sure that probation is where I
23 am at this point.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley, how long will
25 it take to clean up the special ed. issues?

1 MS. HALEY: Well, getting the paperwork in place
2 is one thing, but having an understanding of the law
3 and the requirements is another thing. And I'm
4 sitting here thinking -- I'm sort of wearing two hats
5 now as a member of the Charter Panel and director of
6 Special Education, but, I mean, I'm almost to the
7 point of saying, "You need to devote some of your
8 funds to get someone in there to assist you that's
9 not a part-time person after school and on
10 Saturdays." I know Ms. Gober is doing the right
11 thing and I know you all are trying to provide a good
12 education for kids. But what we heard a little bit
13 when we were there is, "Well, it's the Montessori
14 model," when we were talking about special education.
15 And we understand that and we understand that the
16 Montessori model is good for kids, including kids
17 with IEPs. But they still have to get the services
18 on their IEP and we still have to follow the law.
19 And you don't want to be sitting in a due process
20 hearing or a state complaint or a federal lawsuit
21 over students that didn't receive services or their
22 rights because you didn't know or because teachers
23 didn't know what the kids' accommodations were
24 because they didn't have copies of the IEPs and all
25 those kinds of things that we've talked about. So I

1 would support their -- you would not be the first to
2 have someone on an ALP and not a lot of knowledge
3 about special ed., but that combined with some of the
4 waivers and things like that in terms of the
5 leadership not having that background makes it a
6 little more difficult.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers, what will it
8 take to clean up the finance?

9 MR. ROGERS: I don't know if I can answer that
10 question. I think it really depends on them. I
11 mean, I think that they've seen what we're looking at
12 today and what it would -- I hope what -- they've
13 been working with APSRC to understand what it will
14 take to get there. And so I don't know. I don't
15 know if we could get there. I don't know. What I
16 was thinking about was Stacy's suggestion, and I just
17 don't know if that's where I am right now either.
18 I'm definitely not six months because that puts you,
19 what, into August or September, and there is 151 kids
20 at this school right now and six months would put it
21 right when school is starting back up. So that's --
22 so I just don't know right now. But that's not --
23 definitely not six months.

24 MS. SMITH: And I know that we're all at
25 different places, but -- so what if we thought about

1 probationary for three months, with them coming back
2 in three months with this cleaned up, and then
3 monthly checks with the Charter Unit? And it's their
4 responsibility. That's the thing, it's not the ADE
5 Charter Unit's responsibility to clean up
6 Rockbridge's data or the special ed. piece or the --
7 I mean, we're here to provide the support and
8 services needed to help them, but it would be their
9 responsibility to reach out to their partners to
10 assist them in creating a plan. So possibly
11 probationary status, coming back in three months, and
12 it should be cleaned up -- or you guys may have a
13 different suggestion. That's just kind of where I
14 was heading. Now I definitely think that there's
15 evidence today of lack of action until being called
16 in. I definitely think there's evidence of that. I
17 think that there's evidence today to state that the
18 board has not been a governing board up to this
19 point, that we have made an attempt to make sure that
20 we put three new board members on to have a seven-
21 member board. But I don't feel like up to this point
22 that the board has been the one helping make
23 decisions, as much as maybe just being informed about
24 what's going on. And so I think that there's much
25 work for the board. I mean, even today, the board

1 president not being present today to understand the
2 severity of what we're talking about just kind of
3 shows me that maybe they don't understand how serious
4 this is. So, I mean, I think having an active board
5 that is really taking ownership in some of this and
6 asking the tough questions -- that's the job of the
7 board is to ask those tough questions, and at this
8 point right now I don't think that we have that in
9 place. I think we have well-intentioned people who
10 have the best intentions, but there is a management
11 side to this that -- and I think that the fact that
12 you had a declining enrollment -- and you pointed out
13 earlier that you saw that as a first sign -- I think
14 there are several symptoms here to say that we have a
15 sick system that we need to devote some time to. I'm
16 struggling just a little bit because I think on the
17 education side they have some good things going on,
18 but on the management side they have some poor things
19 going on, where most of the time when we have
20 charters before us we see deficits, severe deficits
21 on the education side but they've kind of got the
22 management side right, you know. So, today, I'm more
23 -- you know -- it's kind of flipped on me. I do
24 think this data-entry and finance piece and some of
25 these things can be cleaned up if it's intentional

1 and people really work at doing so. But those are
2 just my thoughts.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

4 MR. LESTER: Do we know when the Legislative
5 Audit will be finalized? I know he was talking about
6 that. Do you know when your audit is --

7 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir. According to the
8 Legislative Audit, the audit concludes on the 17th.

9 MR. LESTER: Of March?

10 MR. NUCKOLS: Of this month. Yes, sir.

11 MR. LESTER: I think that would be helpful. I
12 think that would be very helpful to see.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers, how quickly do
14 we get a copy of the audit?

15 MR. ROGERS: So when you do have your exit
16 conference would you be acceptable to allowing the
17 Charter Unit to be there to receive a copy of the
18 audit?

19 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir, of course.

20 DR. GOTCHER: So possibly a couple of weeks
21 after -- go ahead.

22 MR. ROGERS: What will happen is after Audit
23 gets through they go back to their office and they
24 compile the papers. And then they come back out to
25 have you sign the exit conference. You have an exit

1 conference where you sign, acknowledging that you
2 received a copy of it, and they will go over the
3 audit findings with you. And at that time you'll get
4 a copy of it and that's usually -- it would depend on
5 how busy Leg Audit is; it's two to three weeks after
6 that. But, yeah, if they'll have the Charter Unit
7 there with them just to go over the audit -- I'm
8 still --

9 MR. LESTER: I'd like to see the federal side
10 too, the whole picture of their finances, so --

11 DR. GOTCHER: Thinking of the families that may
12 have to make some decisions, spring break is next
13 week; three months would put us well into the summer.
14 And if a decision goes poorly that's a very short
15 window for students to -- families to make some
16 decisions. And, secondly, I just -- as I look back
17 through my notes and look at the timeline, I just
18 feel more than enough time has been granted to
19 correct many of these issues. That's all.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional comment?

21 Ms. Davis, if you will remind us of what our
22 options are and if you have any additional comments
23 to add.

24 MS. DAVIS: I do not have any additional
25 comments. And you can, of course, take no action

1 today; you may place them on probation with a plan to
2 come back and what information you'd like to see at
3 that time; you can modify their charter; you can
4 revoke their charter; or you can have them come back
5 next month -- table this decision and have them come
6 back next month pending any information that you may
7 want to see additionally.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Can I ask? So I am going to take
9 us back for just a minute in our discussion. And I
10 understand what Dr. Gotcher is saying too, but there
11 -- to me it seems like there are a few things that --
12 I think a lot of things have been clarified with
13 today's discussion. And so my question then for the
14 Panel is, you know, over the next 30 days we'll have
15 the Standards for Accreditation reports, if I
16 understood them correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's correct.

18 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. We'll have audit. Would we
19 have the federal information as well?

20 MR. ROGERS: It will be in the Leg Audit.

21 DR. PFEFFER: It'll be in the Leg Audit?

22 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

23 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. In 30 days or in the next
24 month would we have a pretty good grasp on whether or
25 not this special ed. is cleaned up?

1 MS. HALEY: Well, they will most likely receive
2 a corrective action plan. Right now they're in a
3 verification period. And they have to have that,
4 depending on what the issue is, corrected as quickly
5 as possible but no later than one year.

6 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

7 MS. HALEY: So there's no way they'll have all
8 the issues corrected --

9 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

10 MS. HALEY: -- but we'll kind of know what their
11 plan is.

12 DR. PFEFFER: We would know the plan in 30 days.
13 I'm thinking the other thing is we could hopefully in
14 30 days -- our present board members could help the
15 others understand some of the issues going on. And
16 possibly we could ask them to come back with a clear
17 corrective action plan in terms of the leadership,
18 the training, some of these other issues, and -- you
19 know -- but you all may -- you all may disagree. But
20 maybe possibly after today we could come back and
21 look at where they are and what they're going to say,
22 because I want to be sure that there is going to be
23 the appropriately licensed special education teacher.
24 I would want to see a commitment from this person
25 that they feel like is going to be working for them

1 next year; if not, then it will be up to Ms. Gober to
2 make that commitment. And she will have to this
3 summer make adequate progress for her first year,
4 which would be I think at least six hours of her
5 coursework completed. So, I mean, I think there are
6 some commitments that could come back to us in
7 writing in 30 days possibly. I think we would just
8 have a little bit of information we don't have today,
9 but I'll just throw that out there.

10 MS. HALEY: Ms. Coffman, I just wanted to say
11 that I've been to Rockbridge and what I see is a very
12 busy place and I see people being pulled all over the
13 place because a child came to the office or you had
14 to escort somebody down the hall. And I'm thinking
15 about the plan and I'm thinking -- I'm just thinking
16 one issue may be there's not enough adults, you know,
17 because I know when we were there Mr. Nuckols had a
18 hard time even getting back to talk to us and the
19 phone -- they have a hard time answering the phone.
20 They're working with kids, they are, but they're all
21 pulled working with kids all the time. And so I
22 think from my perspective a plan to kind of make sure
23 that the phones can be answered, although that's
24 secondary; you know, when someone said they have good
25 -- "They talk to us when we're here," that means they

1 had to go there to get an answer. When the Charter
2 Unit said, "When we go on site," that's because
3 sometimes the phone doesn't get answered because
4 they're in classrooms. And so this is just all
5 interrelated, you know. And so just thinking about
6 the planning, if it were in 30 days, addressing some
7 of those just logistical "how can you do paperwork
8 when you're -- no one has the time to do it or get
9 things in place."

10 MS. SMITH: Again, I think this is -- it goes
11 back to this is a management -- this is a management
12 issue. It is purely a management issue that has to
13 be addressed. I mean, it has to be addressed. We do
14 have a meeting scheduled for Charter Authorizing
15 Panel on May 17th, which would be two months.

16 MS. DAVIS: Okay.

17 MS. SMITH: Is that not -- go ahead.

18 MS. DAVIS: Well, no. I just will remind you
19 that any decision or action that you take, or
20 inaction that you take, regarding them does go before
21 the State Board for review. And if they choose to
22 review your decision, it's going to push it out into
23 the next school year. So I just want to remind you
24 to be aware of that.

25 MS. SMITH: So if we made a decision in May the

1 State Board wouldn't even be able to review it until

2 MS. DAVIS: June.

3 MS. SMITH: June. And then --

4 MS. DAVIS: July. Right. They would decide in
5 June whether to review or not to review.

6 MS. SMITH: They would decide in June to review
7 and then in July they would make a final decision?

8 MS. DAVIS: Well, if they decide to review.
9 Yes.

10 MS. SMITH: If we went that road?

11 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do we also have April
14 19th?

15 MS. DAVIS: We do have something I think
16 scheduled in April, but I don't know if that's the
17 exact date. But there is an April --

18 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: It is the 19th.

19 MS. DAVIS: It is the 19th. But I know that it
20 was mentioned about in time for students to start, so
21 I just wanted to remind you of that.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So if they come back in
23 April with that written plan, is that possible?

24 MS. DAVIS: If they come back in April? Yes. I
25 mean, what you could do -- there's a couple of

1 different ways you could do it. I mean, if you want
2 them to come back in April with this additional
3 information, the audit report and things like that,
4 my recommendation would be that you table a decision
5 till April and have time to review that, and then
6 make your decision in April, and then the State Board
7 can review or not review and make that decision in
8 May. And if they did choose to review, that would be
9 June and it would still be before school started.
10 And the reason I suggest tabling it, rather than
11 placing them on probation for 30 days -- because if
12 you place them on probation that's an action that has
13 to go in front of the State Board and then you'd kind
14 of be taking action over action. So my
15 recommendation would be that you table any decision,
16 if that's what you'd like, pending this information.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so if the action -- if
18 we table today, then that does not go to the Board to
19 review?

20 MS. DAVIS: That's correct. And then, in April
21 you would make a motion to take it off the table and
22 to make a decision based on the information that
23 you've received.

24 MR. ROGERS: What's the latest a charter has
25 ever been closed in a school year?

1 MS. MARY PERRY: We had one close about this
2 time of the year during its first year of operation,
3 when the Board closed it about in March. The Board
4 closed it effective immediately, basically, when they
5 took action that year, and that year would've been
6 spring of 2012. I believe it was March of 2012.
7 Typically, other than that, if a school is being
8 closed it closes at the end of the contract year; it
9 would close effective June 30th. That's been the
10 most common practice and the charter ends June 30th
11 of whatever year. Now there's a whole series of
12 close-out procedures that are in our charter rules
13 that pertain to open enrollment closures, should that
14 be the route that's taken.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, I'm concerned just by
16 the mere discussion of this, what this will do to the
17 existing families now that are in the campus -- on
18 the campus, the families that are enrolled.

19 I go back to two concerns: time for families to
20 make decisions and the ample time that's been given
21 to this charter to make the changes. And I'm just
22 grappling with those and I'm just not convinced that
23 probationary action or tabling is best for these kids
24 and families.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other discussion?

1 Then I'm ready for a motion.

2 DR. GOTCHER: I move for revocation of the
3 charter ending this contract year.

4 MR. ROGERS: Second.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's been a motion by
6 Dr. Gotcher, seconded by Mr. Rogers to revoke the
7 charter effective June 30, 2017. Discussion?

8 I'm going to do a roll-call vote.

9 Mr. Lester.

10 MR. LESTER: No.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

12 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

16 MS. SMITH: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

18 DR. PFEFFER: No.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

20 MS. HALEY: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Four-two. Motion fails.

22 DR. PFEFFER: I'd like to make a motion that we
23 table it for 30 days, in time to get the information
24 referenced earlier. I -- that's probably just the
25 motion, table it for 30 days and come back --

1 MS. DAVIS: Can I --

2 DR. PFEFFER: -- to review. Okay.

3 MS. DAVIS: Can I just make a suggestion that
4 you table it till the next meeting because it may or
5 may not be --

6 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

7 MS. DAVIS: -- right at 30 days.

8 DR. PFEFFER: Understand. Okay. Table it until
9 the next meeting so that we can then review the
10 additional information from Leg Audit, from Standards
11 of Accreditation, from any updates to special
12 education, any updates from the Charter Unit, and I
13 guess I would need to say I would like for them to
14 come with a plan for correction should they be able
15 to continue.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A written plan.

17 DR. PFEFFER: Written plan.

18 MS. SMITH: I second.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A motion has been made by
20 Dr. Pfeffer, seconded by Ms. Smith to table the
21 action until the next meeting, April 19th, at such
22 time we will review additional information that has
23 been requested, including a written plan for
24 correction of action.

25 Discussion?

1 I'll take a roll-call vote.

2 Mr. Lester.

3 MR. LESTER: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

5 MR. ROGERS: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

7 DR. GOTCHER: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

9 MS. SMITH: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

13 MS. HALEY: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The vote is four-two for
15 the motion. Motion carries.

16 All right. If you'll take a moment to go into
17 the reporting document and then we'll go around and
18 let each person give their --

19 MR. DAVIS: I don't think that you need to put
20 the reason why you tabled it because you're not
21 making a decision on the action item.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Great. We'll move along
23 faster.

24 I want to make sure that we have everything
25 listed of what's going to be required when they come

1 back in 30 days. And what do you have on your list,
2 Ms. Davis?

3 MS. DAVIS: I have the Leg Audit report, the
4 standards report, an update -- or any updates
5 available from the Charter Unit, from the
6 Professional Education Unit, and a written plan for
7 corrective action by -- from the charter itself.

8 DR. GOTCHER: And --

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

10 DR. GOTCHER: And approved 1599 disclosure
11 statement.

12 MS. DAVIS: Or at least that one has been
13 requested?

14 DR. GOTCHER: Or whatever the due process is.
15 Yes, ma'am.

16 MS. DAVIS: Optimistically approved, but --

17 MS. SMITH: Well, evidence that all data has
18 been cleaned up, accurate numbers, accurate
19 reflection. The data has to be cleaned up. Evidence
20 that the board has a plan of training -- I mean, we
21 need -- I just need evidence that the board
22 themselves understands their role.

23 DR. PFEFFER: And, Madam Chair, I mean -- and
24 earlier I made the comment I just -- we -- I do think
25 that this is a good option for kids, and because that

1 side of it I feel is in place that kids can benefit I
2 am -- that's why I made the motion to give them a
3 little bit of time. But I also said we're not going
4 to be patient for very long, and without leadership
5 -- and we're not seeing strong leadership today. And
6 without that it's going to be very difficult to vote
7 for them to continue forward. So I just want to
8 really make that evident that, yeah, this is a chance
9 for them to really gut-check and turn it around.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So in the written
11 corrective action plan will you expect to see the
12 person that's going to be held responsible, the
13 timeline?

14 DR. PFEFFER: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And the more detailed the
16 better.

17 DR. PFEFFER: And responsiveness --

18 MS. HALEY: And professional development that's
19 going to happen, if they're going to get some outside
20 help, that needs to be in there.

21 MS. SMITH: This is just my own comment. I
22 definitely want a plan, but I want -- in 30 days I
23 want you to come back in here and say, "Okay, here's
24 our data, it's clean; we know these numbers and this
25 is why; this is what we've done with our finances;

1 and this is the training we've had since." I need
2 action that it's being done. What can you get done
3 in 30 days -- I mean, however many days it is. I
4 mean, I need action.

5 MS. DAVIS: And I just want to -- you know -- we
6 will need a written plan and any documents -- that
7 way, you have time to review it -- at least about two
8 weeks prior. We do understand that, you know, that
9 there are still a lot of things that can be done
10 between the time that they submit and the time of the
11 board meeting or the next Panel meeting. But just be
12 aware that some of the documents you may get at least
13 -- you know -- we do need them earlier with some
14 preliminary.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: How many days ahead of
16 time do you pose, Ms. Perry?

17 MS. MARY PERRY: For a regularly scheduled
18 meeting, like the April meeting, we typically post on
19 -- we typically post by Friday -- not the Friday
20 before; the Friday before that, so that it's up there
21 approximately 10 business days.

22 MS. SMITH: But that's mainly the courtesy of
23 posting for us; correct?

24 MS. MARY PERRY: That's correct. That's a
25 courtesy of posting for you. So we don't have to

1 post it that quickly.

2 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

3 MS. MARY PERRY: You can see that the meeting
4 for today, that post went up on Friday. So we can
5 allow, especially if you direct us to today, to allow
6 them more time so that that can be a little --

7 MS. SMITH: So the next meeting is on what day?

8 MS. MARY PERRY: It's on Wednesday, April the
9 19th.

10 MS. SMITH: I think it would be acceptable to
11 have the items posted by that Monday, and that would
12 give us all the --

13 MS. MARY PERRY: Monday -- Monday, the 17th?

14 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

15 MS. MARY PERRY: And is that going to be for
16 everything that might appear on the agenda that day
17 or are you talking this specific item?

18 MS. SMITH: I think everything.

19 MS. MARY PERRY: Okay.

20 MS. DAVIS: For --

21 MS. SMITH: For this specific thing.

22 MS. MARY PERRY: For Rockbridge.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I think what Ms. Perry
24 and team can do is you can go ahead and post the
25 agenda --

1 MS. MARY PERRY: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- at the appropriate --

3 MS. MARY PERRY: Right.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- time. But if they have
5 additional documents --

6 MS. MARY PERRY: Absolutely.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- they can be uploaded as
8 late as early Monday morning.

9 MS. MARY PERRY: That's great.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's just so you can
11 have more checkmarks of Completed.

12 MS. MARY PERRY: That's right. We just want to
13 be very transparent with, but we also want to give
14 them as much time as possible. So we'll work with
15 them on that and make sure that we have it where it's
16 posted. For everything they're going to give us in
17 hand we can post by noon on Monday. We'll put that
18 in writing in a letter to them, as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you,
20 everyone.

21 We have one more item. Would you like to go
22 ahead and complete that one?

23 A-4: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION REQUEST

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action Item Number 4.

25 MS. MARY PERRY: Mary Perry. At the State Board

1 meeting on Thursday, March 9th, the Board requested
2 that the Panel review information about Covenant
3 Keepers, including but not limited to identifying the
4 challenges and if the challenges are correctable --
5 and let me back-up and say -- focus specifically on
6 academic performance and then if their challenges are
7 correctable. The item is placed on your agenda
8 simply to discuss what action, if any, you want to
9 take about the request made by the State Board, that
10 you look into this. And everyone has been notified
11 -- the charter has been notified that you won't be
12 conducting any review today or anything like that;
13 this is just to decide whether or not you want to
14 have that happen and if so, whether -- what you might
15 want to see from the charter. Please know that Dr.
16 Valerie Tatum is here in the audience, but she
17 understands that this is not hearing time for her to
18 do a presentation for you today.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, will you advise
20 us of our possibilities?

21 MS. DAVIS: Yes. So you can go ahead and make a
22 decision today of whether or not you want to review
23 or not review this charter. And if you choose to
24 review, then we would set that at the next -- yeah --
25 the next meeting or a different meeting, should you

1 want to push it out to May or a later date. You can
2 table this decision; apparently, that's my standard
3 answer today. You can table it to the next meeting,
4 so that way you can gather any additional
5 information. I know this request just came in last
6 week. And so if you want to gather your own
7 additional information regarding the charter and its
8 operations so you can better review and be prepared,
9 you can table the decision until -- or the item until
10 next month and then give you time to review and then
11 make a decision of whether or not you want to review
12 or not review. And if you choose to review, then
13 we'll set a date.

14 DR. PFEFFER: And -- sorry.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

16 DR. PFEFFER: And that's something I was
17 thinking through on timing. I mean, there's been
18 concerns about academic performance at Covenant
19 Keepers in the past, and I think, you know, there
20 have been several reviews done. If -- even if we
21 make the decision that we're going to do a full
22 review or at least a full review of academic issues
23 at the next meeting, what data are we going to have
24 that's different from something that's been reviewed
25 recently? Are we going to have any new information?

1 And I don't know whether there's some issues that
2 have been going on that the Charter Panel has noticed
3 or that have come up in academic distress meetings.
4 So my opinion is I would almost like to have ADE
5 input in terms of is there new information to review
6 before we get results from maybe this next state
7 assessment and, you know, move even maybe a little
8 bit later. So I don't know. I wasn't here at the
9 Board meeting, so I wasn't -- I'm not really sure why
10 the request was made at this time for that.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The request was made
12 because the State Board continued the classification
13 of academic distress.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Based on an assessment that was
15 taken back last year and the designation?

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

17 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So I don't know that
18 there's really been new revelations, but --

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So there was another
20 concordance score reported.

21 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Discussion?

23 DR. PFEFFER: I mean, are there other issues
24 that Special Ed. could bring to the table or
25 Standards or Curriculum and Instruction? Are there

1 issues that others could bring to the table so that
2 we would actually know what we're going to review
3 with them before we actually bring them in to do the
4 review?

5 MR. ROGERS: I don't think any of us were there
6 for the State Board. So I guess I'm confused. What
7 could the State Board -- what could we do that the
8 State Board couldn't do?

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It has to come back
10 through this process.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. So --

12 MR. ROGERS: So could they not -- could the
13 State -- I guess because -- that's where I'm
14 confused. Does it have to come back through us or
15 could they have just asked for their own full review
16 to determine if they saw problems that they've never
17 seen before? Does it have to come to us?

18 MS. DAVIS: Well, I mean -- hang on; let's
19 confirm.

20 DR. GOTCHER: We can bring a charter school in
21 at any time; agreed?

22 MS. DAVIS: Yes.

23 DR. GOTCHER: So here's a data-point, later, in
24 the future, I think we can still honor our State
25 Board's request but wait for the next tier of

1 appropriate data to do a full review. It's just a
2 thought. And Ms. Davis is finished now.

3 MS. DAVIS: Okay. No. I mean, like I say, the
4 big thing -- I mean, you know, you guys are the
5 authorizer and the State Board specifically requested
6 that you make the decision to review them. They're
7 making that request of you, much like, you know,
8 somebody else independently could make that request.
9 And so that's why I think it would be imperative that
10 you make that determination. One thing to consider,
11 I know that there was a timing issue, just much like
12 the last action item. But if you need to get
13 additional information you could choose to, you know,
14 in your spare time, have another Charter Panel
15 meeting next week to make the decision. That would
16 give you a week to gather any information from the
17 Department, then you could come back, have reviewed
18 that, make your decision, and if you choose to review
19 them you can also hear them in the April meeting. So
20 that way, then the State Board would have the option
21 to review or not review in May and it would still
22 wrap up the school year, if that's an issue; if
23 that's a timing issue for you.

24 MS. SMITH: So how many years have we been on
25 academic distress that that was continued? Is this

1 -- do we know?

2 SUPT. TATUM: This is the fourth year.

3 MS. SMITH: It's the fourth year. Okay.

4 MS. HALEY: When was the last time? Wasn't it
5 recent that Covenant Keepers was renewed?

6 SUPT. TATUM: March.

7 DR. GOTCHER: For three years, is that --

8 SUPT. TATUM: No. We were just renewed March
9 2016.

10 MS. HALEY: That's what I thought.

11 MS. SMITH: Renewed in March 2016, for how many
12 years?

13 MS. MARY PERRY: For three years.

14 MS. SMITH: For three years?

15 MS. MARY PERRY: That was a question the Board
16 asked too, their contract. Their contract would end
17 in -- on June 30, 2021, the current contract, since
18 renewal.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis --

21 MS. MARY PERRY: Dr. Tatum wants you to know a
22 couple of things. We had a conversation -- Ms.
23 Virginia Perry and I had a conversation with her
24 earlier this week about this request. And she
25 pointed out -- and it was actually discussed -- been

1 discussed many times; they fairly recently presented
2 in front of the committee that deals with academic
3 distress. They're scheduled to be back there in May.
4 Is that correct, Dr. Tatum?

5 SUPT. TATUM: June.

6 MS. MARY PERRY: June, okay. But within a few
7 months they're scheduled to be back there. And Dr.
8 Tatum is acutely aware that they are working
9 diligently to prepare their students for the spring
10 assessment, so would like -- would request not to
11 have to appear again before the spring assessment is
12 over. That's simply their request though. I just
13 put that out there for you.

14 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Eric Saunders
15 returned to the Panel meeting at 5:31 p.m.)

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Covenant Keepers presented
17 in front of the standing committee on academic
18 distress on June 13, 2017 [sic], and they're
19 currently scheduled for June 9, 2017.

20 MS. MARY PERRY: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: However, Ms. Zook's
22 question to the Board was do they need to come to the
23 standing committee, when the Board decided that they
24 wanted to send them through our review process; they
25 would make that date tentative, if needed, or could

1 change it.

2 MS. SMITH: So what date did they present to the
3 committee?

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: January 13, 2017.

5 MS. SMITH: January 13. Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hang on just a minute.
7 I'll read from my minutes. Covenant Keepers did not
8 appeal the classification of academic distress. The
9 State Board voted unanimously to maintain the
10 classification of district in academic distress for
11 Covenant Keepers Charter School. Ms. Perry said the
12 charter expired June 30, 2019. Ms. Newton moved,
13 seconded by Ms. Zook to request the Charter
14 Authorizing Panel review Covenant Keepers Charter
15 School regarding academic performance, including but
16 not limited to identifying the challenges and if the
17 challenges are correctable. The motion carried
18 unanimously.

19 MS. SMITH: So the State Board did have the
20 option to call them directly to come in to them
21 before -- but they made the choice to send them back
22 to us for recommendations?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that true, Ms. Davis?

24 MS. DAVIS: I wasn't here at the meeting either
25 at the State Board last week. So I believe that the

1 request was that you call them in for review.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think the Board was of
3 the understanding that they needed to come through
4 the entire process so that if we took action to put
5 them on probation or --

6 MS. SMITH: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- change the charter or
8 revoke that it would have followed the due process.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay.

10 I make a motion that we review at the next
11 meeting.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Can we have discussion?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

15 DR. PFEFFER: So my only -- my only thought is
16 will we have the information -- do we have new
17 information really to review? And do we -- I don't
18 know. Again, I guess I would want us to -- could we
19 -- are there things we need to look at internally and
20 gather information to even know what all is it that
21 we need to review? Because if you're just talking
22 about academic performance and identifying
23 challenges, and if the challenges are correctable, to
24 me that goes beyond just how they're performing, like
25 what are their challenges. So I would want to hear

1 from people who have been in the school, what are the
2 -- you know -- what are -- our ADE people, what do we
3 see. Because I don't know that listening to just the
4 school talk about and we look on paper at academic
5 indicators if that's going to be possible. So that's
6 my only concern is just are we just going to go
7 through and then be stuck and what do we decide.
8 And, I mean, we all know we're in a transition right
9 now with our accountability system. That has made
10 our decisions a lot tougher. And we know as we move
11 to a new accountability system and, you know, put
12 some new support things in place I think we'll be in
13 a lot better shape in the future to make decisions
14 about this. But the request to identify challenges
15 and if the challenges are correctable worries me
16 because I don't know what they would be bringing to
17 us next month. And to do another full hearing, you
18 know, it is very complicated.

19 MS. HALEY: Ms. Coffman, I was thinking that too
20 because when we decided to talk to Rockbridge we were
21 told we needed to talk about specific items or if it
22 was the full charter or -- and I don't have enough
23 information to know right now specific items to ask
24 for or to provide or, you know, that kind of thing
25 without us having another meeting, or if we decide to

1 do that.

2 MS. SMITH: I think the focus of this is the
3 fact that they've been on academic distress for four
4 years and that they've presented to the State Board
5 committee on academic distress and they found that
6 there are still issues. I don't know that it's other
7 issues pertaining to the -- I mean, other than the
8 academics. But, again, I agree; we're not going to
9 have the test data for the spring yet. You'll be
10 right in the middle of spring testing. I mean, I
11 agree with all those.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: I was just looking at -- on our
13 -- let's see which sheet I'm looking at -- our
14 agenda, is that wording at the very end of that, is
15 that highly reflective of the statements from the
16 State Board on what we should be looking at so that's
17 what we should use as the guide for that in
18 describing? Correct?

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. But we can certainly
20 add additional information.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They were generic in that
23 because they were on academic distress for the fourth
24 time that we need to really take a close look at it.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But they did not give us a
2 timeline for that.

3 MR. ROGERS: I don't think I understand
4 identifying the challenges and are the challenges
5 correctable just because when we talk about that with
6 academics, is it talking about testing, is it talking
7 about finances, is it talking about data, is it -- I
8 don't know that I understand that, nor do I think --
9 know if we have any new information that -- I mean,
10 obviously, it's still bad; they're still having some
11 issues with academics because they were looking at
12 it. But I don't know what we're -- I guess I'm just
13 kind of confused about what we're supposed to do.

14 MS. SMITH: Okay. I think we're kind of -- I
15 think that this could be a potential revocation. And
16 so in talking in terms of a possible revocation we're
17 doing the same timeline conversation we've had
18 earlier, that if that's what it could possibly end up
19 with when is the latest that we would call them in
20 here to do a hearing to be fair to the people who are
21 employed, the students who attend those schools. So
22 if that's what we're possibly looking into then we're
23 stuck with hearing it at an April or May hearing, if
24 that's the decision we're being charged to make a
25 recommendation about. And when the State Board is

1 asking us based on four years of academic distress to
2 re-look at a charter, I mean, I think that's kind of
3 the charge -- I mean, I think that's the charge, that
4 you need to determine after looking at this should
5 they continue on or not and make a recommendation
6 accordingly. I mean, I think that's what we're being
7 asked to do.

8 MR. ROGERS: So you're moving it to a full
9 hearing?

10 MS. SMITH: I think that when we review them
11 that we're making a recommendation on that. Is that
12 not the case?

13 MS. DAVIS: Well, I mean, what you're wanting --
14 it would be a hearing just like the last action item
15 was. And what you can do, I know, is there's
16 questions about what we need to request. And if you
17 choose to make a decision to review today, you can
18 take, you know, a couple of days to each individually
19 send to me or the Charter Office the specific items
20 that you would like to see. So that way, when we
21 notify the charter we can put those items in; so that
22 way they will be on notice of what it is that you
23 would like to see and you would at least maybe have a
24 few days to think about it since you're kind of in
25 this position.

1 MS. SMITH: Right.

2 MS. DAVIS: So that is an option as well.

3 MS. SMITH: Well, the School Improvement team
4 should have --

5 MS. DAVIS: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Reports.

7 MS. SMITH: Yeah. I mean, we should have 45-day
8 reports, we should have --

9 MS. DAVIS: Right.

10 MS. SMITH: -- all the things from School
11 Improvement that were presented to the State Board
12 when we were asked to review it. I mean, to me
13 that's the evidence we're looking at.

14 MR. LESTER: Did I hear mention of a new
15 concordant score?

16 MS. SMITH: Yes.

17 MR. LESTER: Because that would be --

18 MS. SMITH: Yeah, that's from benchmark, from
19 PARCC, to ACT Aspire.

20 MS. HALEY: When will the new test data be
21 available?

22 MS. SMITH: July 1.

23 MS. HALEY: Okay. Because --

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then sometime after
25 that for concordant.

1 MS. HALEY: So --

2 MS. SMITH: Testing doesn't occur until -- I
3 mean, that's what Dr. Tatum was talking about --
4 April or May.

5 DR. PFEFFER: So, Ms. Smith, your motion would
6 include the -- in the -- identifying the challenges
7 and if the challenges are correctable; it would
8 include information from our School Improvement Unit,
9 recommendations from our School Improvement Unit, and
10 any other unit that would have relevant information
11 that might be lending to challenges of academic
12 success in that school?

13 MS. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yeah. We'd go through the
15 whole list with Ms. Davis.

16 MS. SMITH: I mean, I think what was presented
17 to the academic -- to the committee is what we're --
18 part of the things that we would review.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional discussion
20 before we revisit our motion?

21 MS. DAVIS: And just so I'm clear, that would
22 potentially, if the motion is -- any other unit that
23 would have information that would lend itself to the
24 challenges, that would also include finance, you
25 know, anything else; correct?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We'll go through and make
2 sure that you have everything.

3 Let's first decide if we're going to review.

4 So I have a motion by Ms. Smith, second by Dr.
5 Gotcher to review Covenant Keepers at the next
6 meeting.

7 All those in favor?

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

10 Motion carries unanimously.

11 So let's be a little more detailed to Ms. Davis
12 what you want to see.

13 MS. SMITH: I want to see the documentation that
14 was provided to -- about academic distress; so from
15 School Improvement Unit. That's the information I
16 would like to --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So all the comprehensive
18 complete list --

19 MS. SMITH: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- of 45-day plans?

21 MS. SMITH: The 45-day plans and we need School
22 Improvement to be here.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And the concordance?

24 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh. How the decision was made
25 and where they fall out over the four-year period.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So that's two
2 different units. Who else? What else?

3 DR. PFEFFER: I'd like to have information on
4 their estimated teacher vacancies and their plans to
5 fill key positions, if they are going to have any
6 vacancies in any of those.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anything else?

8 DR. PFEFFER: Finance.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can we request that the
10 Board be represented?

11 MS. DAVIS: Pardon me?

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can we request that the
13 Board of Directors be represented?

14 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Of Covenant Keepers.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Covenant Keepers board of
17 directors.

18 Anything from finance?

19 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. I guess since we're doing
20 challenges and if the challenges are correctable it
21 would include finance. I mean, I just feel like it's
22 -- well, dadgumit -- look, you're having to get on me
23 all the time. Yes, I feel like it has to be finance
24 and data.

25 MS. HALEY: I think special ed. would be

1 reflected in School Improvement, but we'll take a
2 look and see if there's additional information.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Ms. Davis, if there
4 have been any comprehensive reviews, like OSR visits
5 or anything out of public school accountability.

6 MS. SMITH: Yeah. To me, this is an
7 accountability piece. I mean, that's what's -- I
8 mean, I think when we talk about the idea of renewing
9 applications in here and we argue on is it 3 years,
10 is it 10 years, is it 15, could it be 20, we say we
11 have systems in place to wave a red flag when there's
12 something wrong. So academic distress or School
13 Improvement Unit, that's one of those red flags;
14 they're waving the flag. This is the fourth year and
15 now we're reviewing. That's the system in place that
16 we have to say, okay, we need to go back and look at
17 it. So I don't know that it's -- I mean, and I do
18 think that when you have systems you do have several
19 areas that are symptomatic, and I think we saw that
20 earlier -- there's more than one thing usually
21 happening when you have a system that's an issue.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: And I think on my end, talking
23 about what Mr. Rogers was referencing earlier,
24 might've been on the data, the data reporting still
25 having some issues with accurate student enrollment

1 reporting.

2 MR. ROGERS: Yes, that's --

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any clarification, Ms.
4 Davis?

5 MS. DAVIS: No. But I'm going to read this back
6 to you just to make sure that I didn't miss
7 something. Okay. So you would like to see
8 documentation that provided -- regarding academic
9 distress, including the 45-day plans; any information
10 from School Improvement, in addition to that unit
11 being represented; the concordance and pretty much
12 everything over a four-year period, which would also
13 include special education, but they're also going to
14 check into their own reporting on that; an estimated
15 amount of teacher vacancy and any plans to fill those
16 positions; you're requesting that all addition -- I
17 mean, all personnel from the charter that could
18 possibly be able to be responsive to any of your
19 questions, including the board of directors, be
20 present at the review; you'd like to see any
21 comprehensive reviews --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Could you stop and back-up
23 on that one?

24 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: On the personnel --

1 MS. DAVIS: From the charter, anybody that can
2 answer the questions; you'd like to have everybody
3 who could possibly answer any of the questions that
4 you may have be present at the review. That could
5 possibly be, you know, somebody from their financing
6 staff, things of that nature, including their board
7 of directors be represented.

8 Any comprehensive reviews, such as OSR visits --
9 is that OSR?

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think so.

11 MS. DAVIS: Okay. And their financial data,
12 especially anything that may cause -- leave them
13 challenges and lead to the academic challenges that
14 they're having, including their data and problems --
15 continued problems with accurate student enrollment
16 reporting. Did I get it all?

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: The only thing we left off
18 is Leg Audit.

19 All right. Is that complete?

20 Any issues remaining today, Ms. Davis?

21 MS. DAVIS: I do not have any.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anyone from the Panel?

23 MS. HALEY: Were we going to vote on this sheet
24 that was here to do this? Because there's a board
25 sheet -- yeah.

1 MS. DAVIS: Yeah, you will need to on that one.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Oh, thank you, Ms. Haley. Did
4 that come in a different email?

5 MS. HALEY: Yes.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

7 MS. HALEY: The second email she sent.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Good catch, Ms. Haley.

9 MS. HALEY: We already voted, I think.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Is it the blank voting sheet?

12 DR. GOTCHER: Oh, we didn't have to give
13 responses --

14 MS. DAVIS: You didn't for action item number 3
15 because you did not make a decision on it.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But we will need to for
17 action item 4?

18 MS. DAVIS: Yes, because you made a decision.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

20 MS. DAVIS: You took action on it. There you
21 go.

22 DR. PFEFFER: Is it the blank one?

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Kelly --

24 MS. HALEY: No, it says Covenant Keepers.

25 DR. PFEFFER: I gotcha.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: It's called (inaudible)

2 DR. PFEFFER: It's -- yeah, it's called --

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I don't have Covenant
4 Keepers.

5 DR. PFEFFER: It's the blank one.

6 MS. DAVIS: It may say Blank, but the name has
7 recently changed to Covenant Keepers.

8 DR. PFEFFER: But this one you open and it says
9 it.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Yeah, it's been updated to
11 Covenant Keepers.

12 MS. DAVIS: Okay.

13 DR. GOTCHER: What did we vote for? To review,
14 that's right.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You voted --

16 MR. ROGERS: Do we have to give a reason?

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, why you want to --
18 why you've voted for the review. We're much snappier
19 in the morning.

20 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

22 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the review. I want to
23 honor the State Board's request but recognize that --
24 recognize the multiple academic concerns that need a
25 thorough review from our team.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

2 MS. HALEY: I voted for the review due to the
3 academic distress status.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

5 MR. LESTER: I voted for the review based upon
6 the academic distress status as recommended by the
7 State Board.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeiffer.

9 DR. PFEFFER: I voted for the review to honor
10 the recommendation by the State Board.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

12 MR. ROGERS: I voted for, same reasons that
13 everybody has already stated.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Voted for State Board
16 recommendation.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

18 MS. SMITH: I voted for based on multiple years
19 of academic distress designation.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional issues
21 before the Panel today?

22 MS. DAVIS: I don't have any, but I still have
23 those yoga mats if you feel like you need them now.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Just for a nap.
25 Then I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I guess on her comment, motion to
2 adjourn.

3 MS. SMITH: Second.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
5 Dr. Saunders and seconded by Ms. Smith to adjourn.
6 All those in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, everyone.
9

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11 (The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.)
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A-2: SIATech
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-3: ROCKBRIDGE
EXHIBIT ONE (1)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
 COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on March 15, 2017, that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: March 27, 2017.

SHARON K. HILL, CCR
 Certified Court Reporter
 Certificate No. 670